

Madam Speaker, I strongly oppose S. 2271, Additional Reauthorizing Amendments to the PATRIOT Act. This legislation fails to address any of the core fundamental flaws with the original PATRIOT Act and makes controversial provisions permanent which threaten American's civil liberties. By making the sunset provisions permanent, we are losing the opportunity for a meaningful review.

Time and time again, we have extended the reauthorization deadline in an effort to fix the flaws and yet once more we have brought forth legislation that compromises our civil rights in exchange for government control.

As we saw last year, the administration was cavalier with domestic spying through the National Security Administration. Their ability to undermine the American public should worry my colleagues and makes me question the reasoning behind giving additional authority with the USA Patriot Act.

In S. 2271, a recipient of national security letters (NSL) is able to challenge a nondisclosure (gag) order but they must wait a year until they can file a petition and that order can be renewed indefinitely at the government's discretion, making it harder to challenge.

In addition, S. 2271 fails to provide meaningful protection for the privacy of library patrons and library records. It exempts libraries that operate in their traditional role, but does not exempt those who use or offer electronic communication services such as Internet access.

This legislation gives the administration too much flexibility and does not force Congress to review the act as needed. In a country that prides itself on civil rights and freedom of speech we must have the ability to question and modify legislation. We must maintain a system with checks and balances to ensure that our government works for our citizens in a transparent way.

The lack of transparency is further demonstrated with the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act. Methamphetamine has taken Oregon, as well as this country, by storm. I fully support efforts to combat this epidemic; however, I will not vote for the egregious PATRIOT Act just because it includes methamphetamine provisions. This is a cheap tactic and we should not be using victims of this epidemic as political chess pieces.

I have no doubt that we can keep America safe without compromising our civil liberties. Sadly, the bill does compromise our rights.