

# What is the USA PATRIOT Act?

**The USA PATRIOT Act** and Related Executive Orders is a 342-page document which few Congresspeople took time to read before it was pushed through Congress and signed into Federal law by President Bush in the name of national security on October 26, 2001, just six weeks after 9/11. Below are some of the restrictions to our constitutional rights and civil liberties:

## **AUTHORIZES INDEFINITE AND MASS DETENTIONS** (SECTION 412):

It permits the Attorney General to **detain non-citizens**, including legal, long-term permanent residents, and **incarcerate them based on mere suspicion** and **deny their re-admission** to the U.S. for engaging in speech protected by the First Amendment. This can also be used for **racial profiling** by targeting certain ethnic groups.

## **REMOVES CHECKS AND BALANCES** (SECTIONS 214, 216):

It greatly weakens the power of the court system to prevent the FBI and other law enforcement authorities from **illegal telephone, email and Internet surveillance** in both anti-terrorism and ordinary criminal investigations of American citizens.

## **ALLOWS SECRET SEARCHES** (SECTION 213):

It expands the authority of the government in both terrorism and general investigations to conduct “sneak and peek” or “black bag” secret searches. These searches **allow the FBI to use a search warrant to enter and search a home or office without prior notification.**

## **DEVASTATES PRIVACY PROTECTIONS** (SECTIONS 215, 508):

It grants the FBI and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies **broad access to highly personal medical, mental health, financial, and student records, in addition to a persons library records, and bookstore purchases** with only minimal judicial oversight and standards.

## **LOWERS INVESTIGATING STANDARDS** (SECTION 218):

It permits law enforcement agents to **investigate American citizens** for criminal matters **without establishing probable cause** based on the unproven assertion that the investigation is for “intelligence purposes.”

## **RENEWS DOMESTIC SPYING** (SECTION 901):

It puts the CIA and FBI firmly back in the business of **spying on private citizens as well as organizations.** Agents can infiltrate houses of worship and monitor open religious and political meetings **without evidence of a crime.**

## **THREATENS FREE SPEECH** (SECTION 803):

It contains an overbroad definition of “**domestic terrorism.**” The new definition is so vague that the government could **designate lawful advocacy groups – such as Operation Rescue and Greenpeace – as terrorist,** subject them to surveillance, wiretapping, and harassment, and then criminally penalize them for what should have remained constitutionally protected speech.

Call your elected representatives today to express your concerns about this Act. Ask them to repeal it or adopt a resolution against it. To find out more, go to [www.neighborsforpeaceandjustice.org](http://www.neighborsforpeaceandjustice.org).