

February 13, 2008: Wittman Statement on Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act

(Washington D.C.)

- After a series of votes regarding the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, Congressman Rob Wittman (R-VA) released the following statement:

"The updated Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), as passed in the Senate by an overwhelming 68-29 vote, is a fair and bipartisan compromise that meets the needs of our intelligence agencies and closes a dangerous loophole in our outdated intelligence laws. FISA is a critical component of our federal government's plan to combat terrorism and we must not let the 15 day extension of the current law expire without passing a long-term bill. Another extension, no matter the length, should not be a choice at this time. The House must pass the Senate bill immediately.

"We know that terrorist cells are planning, plotting and operating within the United States. Our intelligence agencies need to be able to listen in on their communications, observe their movements and monitor their transmissions without hindrance. And those private firms that assist our federal government in preventing future acts of terrorism from being carried out against their fellow citizens should be able to do so free from the threat of prosecution or litigation.

"We do have an obligation to ensure that no one's civil liberties are violated, but we also have a sacred duty to protect against the loss of innocent life at all costs. I believe that this bill will uphold our cherished liberties while providing our intelligence community with the tools and flexibility they need to respond to threats of terrorism at home and abroad.

"The American people deserve to sleep soundly at night knowing that their elected officials have exercised every available option to keep them safe and secure from the threat of terrorism. This is not a partisan issue. It is a matter of national security, and one that should be our highest priority.

"We have witnessed firsthand the destruction these individuals are capable of inflicting upon us. When I was elected to Congress I took an oath to defend the American people from the evils that lurk in the shadows, waiting to do harm to our great nation. I pledged to do all that I possibly could to preserve and protect our great democracy, and today I have voted consistently to do just that."

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