

# No Amnesty for Telecom Lawbreakers!

## Editorial pages around the nation are weighing in:

### San Francisco Chronicle:

"One of the most hotly contested provisions of the Senate's FISA bill would retroactively grant telecom providers with legal immunity ....

"The suppression of those lawsuits would effectively wipe out an opportunity for Americans to finally get a sense of the scope of the Bush administration's defiance of [federal surveillance law] ...

"Fortunately, key members of the House ... appear determined to resist ...."

### Los Angeles Times:

"As for the phone companies, the resistance in Congress to granting them immunity to a great extent reflects the view that lawsuits against them might be the only way to obtain an accounting of exactly what the Terrorist Surveillance Program involved — wiretapping only, or the widespread data mining of phone records? If the president really wants to spare the companies the threat of litigation, he must level with Congress and the country about how much privacy Americans are sacrificing in the war on terror."

### Denver Post:

"House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said that [retroactive immunity] might be the price of getting the president to stop making veto threats and sign a new law. Enough capitulation already. Congressional Democrats must pass a law that provides a way to make sure the administration isn't abusing its authority and empowers the FISA court to protect civil liberties. It's not too much to ask."

### Dallas Morning News:

"Congress is right to look at the immunity proposal with a skeptical eye, especially since the administration has been reluctant to explain details of its controversial surveillance programs to lawmakers. The law would further erode the privacy firewall and remove another layer of checks and balances."

### Toledo Blade:

"[I]mmunity is not warranted and should not be granted by Congress."

### Brattleboro Reformer:

"Naturally, the companies want immunity. But the 1978 FISA law is crystal clear on this — to monitor the communication of Americans overseas, probable cause for surveillance must exist and a court warrant must be granted."

### New York Times:

"[Telecom immunity] is not primarily about protecting patriotic businessmen, as Mr. Bush claims. It's about ensuring that Mr. Bush and his aides never have to go to court to explain how many laws they've broken."

### Bangor Daily News:

"Rather than broaden the Protect America Act, Congress should scale it back, and the House should refuse the blanket immunity portion of the bill agreed to in a Senate Committee."

### Boston Globe:

"To its credit, the House drops the immunity provisions for the telecommunications companies in the new bill and carries its own expiration date, two years from passage."

### New Jersey Star Ledger:

"The immunity bill would let the telecommunications companies off the hook, but not administration officials. This is misguided. All those who deliberately broke the surveillance laws should be held to account. If not, we are simply inviting more privacy abuses in the future."

### Buffalo News:

"Whoever elicited this information from the communications companies clearly had no right to it under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The Bush administration nearly concedes the point in demanding the grant of immunity. If the phone companies didn't do anything illegal, why do they need immunity?"

### News & Observer (North Carolina):

"The Democratic proposal made sense: a secret foreign intelligence court would have had more oversight over the NSA program, particularly the interception of communications coming into the United States from abroad. When Americans were involved in those communications, there would have had to be more accountability. In other words, the NSA would have had to justify what it was doing in some cases."

"The Bush administration, however, prefers carte blanche ...."

### USA Today:

*Immunity Demand For Telecoms Raises Questions*

"As history shows, mass snooping can sweep up innocent citizens."

### Anniston Star:

"The fear: giving government unchecked power here will lead to the sorts of abuses we witnessed in earlier times."

### Miami Herald:

*Our Opinion: Congress Should Allow Lawsuits to Proceed*

"This is nothing less than a cover-up designed to keep the public in the dark about how seriously their constitutional rights were violated."

Nearly 60% of voters oppose immunity for telecom lawbreakers\*, and with good reason. Americans don't want Congress to cover up illegal activities that violate their privacy, and they want the courts to decide if the law has been broken. The nonprofit Electronic Frontier Foundation represents the customers of AT&T in a case against the telecom giant for illegally delivering millions of private communications and records to the NSA. Congress should answer America's call: **Reject telecom immunity and let the courts do their job!**

\* The Mellman Group poll, October 15, 2007

For a complete list of editorials and links visit: [www.eff.org/notelecomamnesty](http://www.eff.org/notelecomamnesty)



**ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION**

Protecting Rights and Promoting Freedom on the Electronic Frontier

[www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org)