

April 2, 2003

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker, House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515-1314

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In recent weeks, there have been reports, including the release of draft legislation that became public on February 7, 2003, that the Administration intends to submit new anti-terrorism legislation to the Congress. While the undersigned organizations may have differing views on some of the substantive provisions of the draft Domestic Security Enhancement Act, we are all deeply concerned that anti-terrorism measures not erode basic civil liberties. To that end, we write to ask for your commitment concerning the procedures that the House of Representatives will use in considering the Administration's proposals, if and when they are presented to Congress. This legislation, like any proposal dedicated to reducing the risk of terrorism, should be considered calmly and deliberately with a determination to protect both national security and the liberties and freedoms at the core of the American way of life.

Accordingly, we urge you to ensure that the House of Representatives follows normal parliamentary procedures when it takes up any new anti-terrorism legislation. The Administration's bill should not be considered until it has gone through the full OMB clearance process. The bill should be referred to the Judiciary and other appropriate committees on a schedule that provides adequate time for full and careful analysis. Those committees should hold extensive hearings, where the Administration can explain its views in detail and outside groups can respond, before marking up the bill. To ensure that the final legislation benefits from this careful review, the bill that is brought to the floor of the House should be the one that has been reported out by the appropriate committees.

By following these procedures, the House is more likely to ensure that any legislation it enacts will properly reconcile the requirements of security with the demands of liberty. We know that you share this goal, and we look forward to your leadership and assistance.

Thank you for your consideration,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Association of Law Libraries
American Baptist Churches USA
American Civil Liberties Union
American Conservative Union
Americans for Democratic Action
American Friends Service Committee
American Immigration Lawyers Association
American Library Association
American Policy Center

Americans for Tax Reform
Amnesty International USA
Arab-American Institute
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Asian Americans for Equality
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Association of American Physicians & Surgeons
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Democracy and Technology
Center for Justice & Accountability
Center for National Security Studies
Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Common Cause
Constitution Project
Council on American Islamic Relations
Criminal Justice Policy Foundation
Doctors for Disaster Preparedness
Drug Policy Alliance
Eagle Forum
Electronic Frontier Foundation
First Amendment Foundation
Free Congress Foundation
Freedom of Information Center, University of Missouri School of Journalism
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Government Accountability Project
Hate Free Zone Campaign of Washington
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
Human Rights Watch
Interfaith Alliance, The
International Institute of Boston
Japanese American Citizens League
Latin American Integration Center
Lawyers Committee for Human Rights
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Libertarian Party
Multiracial Activist
Muslim Public Affairs Council
National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Black Police Association
National Coalition Against Repressive Legislation
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
National Employment Law Project

National Immigration Forum

National Immigration Law Center
National Lawyers Guild
OMB Watch
Open Society Policy Center
Organization of Chinese Americans
People For the American Way
Presbyterian Church USA, Washington Office
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
Project on Government Oversight
Rutherford Institute
Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force
Square One Media Network
Union of American Hebrew Congregation
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Washington Defender Association
Women Against War
World Organization Against Torture USA

cc: Representative Tom Davis
Chairman, Committee on Government Reform

Representative Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Government Reform

Representative Christopher Cox
Chairman, Select Committee on Homeland Security

Representative Jim Turner
Ranking Member, Select Committee on Homeland Security

Representative Porter J. Goss
Chairman, Select Committee on Intelligence

Representative Jane Harman
Ranking Member, Select Committee on Intelligence

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Representative F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary

Representative Mr. John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary