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ACLU Delivers Patriot Act Reform Petition to Congressman Bishop

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH – Congressman Robert Bishop received a petition from constituents today urging him to protect the modest reforms in the Senate version of Patriot Act reauthorization legislation. The petition, gathered in a joint effort between the ACLU and Working Asset’s Act for Change program, is seeking his support to change some of the most controversial and secretive powers expanded by the Patriot Act, which may be voted on as early as next week.

“By signing this petition, Utah residents are standing up for their civil liberties, while urging Congressman Bishop to do the same,” said Dani Eyer, Executive Director of the ACLU of Utah. “The Senate version is a step in the right direction, helping to bring some parts of the Patriot Act in line with the Constitution by restoring checks and balances on government power.”

The Senate version revises several of the Patriot Act’s most controversial provisions. For example, the Senate bill puts a four-year sunset on the government’s ability to secretly demand library, medical, financial, or gun ownership records. The Senate bill also ensures that the government must demonstrate, to a judge, some facts warranting the search and a connection to a suspected terrorist or spy. It also provides a better right to challenge the demand under grand jury rules.

Under the Senate bill, if a sneak and peek search is allowed, the government must give notice within seven days (with some exceptions and extensions) that it has searched a person’s home or business. The House version of the act allows for an initial 180-day delay in notice of these secret searches, which are not limited to terrorism cases.

Nationwide, nearly 70,000 people have signed on to the petition to reform the Patriot Act. To circulate the petition, the ACLU allied with Working Assets, a telecommunications group that financially supports grassroots activism.

“At both the local and national level, people who care about civil liberties are speaking out against unconstitutional provisions in the Patriot Act,” said Caroline Fredrickson, Director of the ACLU’s Washington Legislative Office. “The Patriot Act went too far, too fast, and impacts the lives of ordinary Americans. Around the country, Americans have spoken loud and clear on the need for Patriot Act reform. And now, more than ever, they need their elected officials to listen.”

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