

Monday, August 14th, 2006

**Terrorist plots:** I am a privacy advocate and general civil libertarian. I don't want the government snooping around in my or anybody else's business without just cause. When the renewal of the Patriot Act came up during my first few weeks in Congress, I thought about that vote for a long time and closely examined the legislation. In the end, I felt that the bill contained adequate safeguards to protect our rights, so I voted for it. It was the right vote to make.

Had MI5 in Britain not been able to tap phones, monitor Internet traffic, and watch overseas financial transactions, there might now be hundreds airline passengers dead at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. The British authorities have been clear about how the success of their operation was tied to the surveillance they were able to conduct against these and other suspects.

In recent months, there has been lots of criticism in this country about the government's surveillance of international financial transactions and phone records. I hope that the foiling of this recent plot puts all of this to rest. I don't want my phone calls or Internet usage scrutinized. But under the law, they can't do anything with this information unless it leads them to believe I am a terrorist.

I wish we didn't have to do this. I also wish there were not Islamic extremists trying to blow us all up. But there are, and there will be for a long time. So, until the terrorists are defeated, I'm willing to put up with a little less privacy in exchange for a lot more safety. Last weeks events were a clear demonstration of how these powers are used to make us safer.

**Do Nothing?** Last week, I wrote you about 2 bills passed which in the House with bipartisan support. One, the pension reform bill (H.R. 4) passed the Senate overwhelmingly by a vote of 93-5 and is now on the president's desk awaiting an expected signature. As I mentioned, this bill will go a long way towards making sure that in the future corporations do not promise employees pensions that are not funded or can not be paid out. That's good. Next we must deal with taxpayer funded pensions at all levels of government which are also over-promised and unfunded. Why should a school district be able to promise a pension and not fund it when a private company cannot do the same? Giving governments (including Social Security) similar requirements will protect both the taxpayers who pay the pensions and the employees who receive them.

The other bill was the minimum wage increase/death tax reduction bill. Unfortunately, this bill failed to receive the necessary 60 votes needed to pass bills in the Senate. Even though Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) tried very hard to pass this bill (H.R. 5970), the Minority leader Harry Reid was successful in convincing enough senators who were "on the fence" to oppose the bill.

After H.R. 5970 received only 56 votes, Reid immediately went to the press and declared that this was evidence of a "do nothing Congress." Huh? How does he personally kill legislation

containing his number one priority (minimum wage) and then complain that those who supported it were doing nothing? It's as though someone punched a hole in your boat to sink it and then sued you for improper maintenance procedures, (oh wait, that sort of thing really does happen).

Anyway, it is very disheartening that cleverly crafted legislation with the support of bi-partisan majorities in both chambers (and the president) became the victim partisan posturing.

But both chambers will keep working to pass this bill before the end of the year.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell