



Wyden backs USA Freedom Act

By: Kate Tummarello – November 5, 2013

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a vocal critic of NSA surveillance programs, announced Tuesday his support for the surveillance-limiting USA Freedom Act.

The bill, introduced late last month and sponsored by Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and USA Patriot Act author Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisc.), would reign in the NSA's surveillance power.

"Now that the Senate Intelligence Committee has decided to preserve surveillance business-as-usual, Chairman Leahy's legislation is now our best hope for reform in this Congress," Wyden said in a statement.

"There's work going on in both the Intelligence and Judiciary Committees, and I'm very interested in helping to build that coalition every step of the way," Wyden told reporters Tuesday.

Wyden also announced that Leahy has signed on as a co-sponsor of Wyden's Intelligence Oversight and Surveillance Reform Act.

In September, Wyden — along with Sens. Mark Udall (D-Colo.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.) — introduced the bill which would, like the USA Freedom Act, ban the program that collects records on all U.S. phone calls and bring more transparency to the surveillance programs.

"Our bipartisan legislation sets the bar for real, meaningful reforms to surveillance law," Wyden said in his statement.

"This includes ending the dragnet domestic surveillance that has infringed on the Constitutional rights of millions of Americans without making our country any safer."

Tuesday, Wyden encouraged "everyone who has supported Senators Udall, Paul, Blumenthal and myself in our efforts to lend their support to Chairman Leahy as he works to advance the USA Freedom Act," he said.

At a Cato Institute event last month, Sensenbrenner criticized Wyden's bill, saying the USA Freedom Act is superior.

"We think we have got the bugs out of the legislation," he said of the USA Freedom Act.

"We didn't when Sen. Wyden picked up a discussion draft and introduced it. Our bill is better than his because there are a couple of loopholes that we didn't catch."