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Can Skittles help fix the PATRIOT Act and FISA?

By: [JonPincus](#) Sunday October 4, 2009 4:00 pm



(Promoted by [jasonrosenbaum](#) - *More to do on this great cause.*)

This Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee plans to vote on a couple of amendments by Russ Feingold proposing significant reforms to the PATRIOT Act and the FISA wiretapping statutes. These votes are the best chance yet to influence the PATRIOT Act reauthorization in the Senate. We're kicking off a last-minute Twitter- and Facebook- based activism campaign to pressure key politicians and try to get some media coverage on the issue. Please get involved!



- On Twitter, [thank Arlen Specter](#) for his vote last week -- and come back Tuesday night and make another tweet about the Patriot Act
- On Facebook, sign up for Tuesday's [Action to fix the Patriot Act](#) and invite your friends
- Help get the word out by sharing this link with your friends (via Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, or carrier pigeon).

Read on for more ...

Earlier this year, my multi-part series *Lessons from Skittles for poets and activists* explored Twitter-based activism. The series was inspired by Agency.com's brilliant promotion for Skittles, the rainbow-colored candy. Within two days, Skittles got 3000 links from blogs and significant traditional media attention by replacing their home page with a Twitter feed of the #skittles hashtag. It seemed to me that activists and poets — and anybody else who wants media attention without spending a lot of money — had a lot to learn here.

Six months later, it's time to apply the lessons.

Get FISA Right activists, along with progressives and libertarians, are trying to spearhead a last-minute social media activism campaign to complement all the other hard work the EFF, ACLU, American Library Association, Cato Institute, BORDC, CREDO Action, Downsize DC, and many other groups have been doing. Time is incredibly short. Fortunately, things happen very quickly in the Twitterverse.



The basic idea's straightforward: try to get enough momentum that the campaign goes viral on Twitter and Facebook, and then target some key politicians and journalists. At that point, hopefully traditional media wakes up and takes notice -- and politicians are confronted with the overwhelming opposition online to the government surveillance and telecom immunity. With luck, it leads to a success like Get FISA Right had last summer organizing on my.barackobama.com with the support of progressive and technology blogospheres.

Since then, there have a series of breakthrough social media actions on other issues: Join the Impact, #amazonfail, the DREAM Activists, Open for Questions, Twitter Vote Report, the Facebook Terms of Service protesters, #iranelection ... and there's a fascinating pattern: most of the people involved in all of these causes also care about fixing the PATRIOT Act and opposing government surveillance. Can we tap into those existing networks, and get people to spend a few moments tweeting, sharing links, and forwarding an invitations on Facebook and MySpace?

A bunch of us laid the groundwork this week with a lot of tweeting on the #patriotact hashtag and a steadily-growing [Facebook group](#). San Francisco-based startup Twazzup was kind enough to provide a search page and so [it's easy to follow what's going on](#). We've also been using act.ly, Jim Gilliam's brilliantly viral Twitter petition mechanism, in particular to encourage Senator Arlen Specter -- who, coincidentally or not, voted the right way in last Thursday's hearing. If you'd like to sign our "thank you" petition to him, please use the widget on the right -- and share it with your friends.



After spending the weekend recuperating, we're planning some major action for Tuesday night. If you'd like to help fix the PATRIOT Act and FISA, please join us:

- On Twitter, [thank Arlen Specter](#) for his vote last week -- and come back Tuesday night and make another tweet about the Patriot Act
- On Facebook, sign up for Tuesday's [Action to fix the Patriot Act](#) and invite your friends
- Help get the word out by sharing this link with your friends (via Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, or carrier pigeon).

The easiest way to follow what's going on will be to visit <http://get-fisa-right.wetpaint.com>, where we're also featuring the #patriotact Twitter feed.

Hey, it worked for #skittles :-)

jon

* for a list of references, please the Twitter section of my [Selected writings on activism](#) page.

Skittles photo [from ambibambie39507's flickr page](#), licensed under Creative Commons



[Spotlight](#)

6 Responses to “Can Skittles help fix the PATRIOT Act and FISA?”

Loo Hoo. October 4th, 2009 at 7:42 pm

[1](#)

Is there a primer for twitter? I'd like to join on facebook, but I don't see how.

Where are my daughters when I need them???

 [Reply](#)

 [JonPincus](#) October 4th, 2009 at 7:58 pm

[2](#)

Indeed there is a primer! <http://get-fisa-right.wetpaint.....to+Twitter>

For the Facebook event, there's an RSVP section near the top right. Click on Attending. And then invite your daughters — and ask them to invite their friends :-)

 [Reply](#)

Loo Hoo. October 4th, 2009 at 8:23 pm

[3](#)

Jon, I don't have a blackberry or iphone. Is twitter used on regular email?

 [Reply](#)

Loo Hoo. October 4th, 2009 at 8:23 pm

[4](#)

through text messages?

 [Reply](#)


[Jason Rosenbaum](#) October 5th, 2009 at 7:14 am

[5](#)

In response to [Loo Hoo. @ 4](#)

Yep, you can use it through text, too. And email.

 [Reply](#)

 [JonPincus](#) October 5th, 2009 at 8:14 am

[6](#)

In response to [Jason Rosenbaum @ 5](#)

And you can use it from a browser as well, just go to twitter.com.

 [Reply](#)

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment. If you don't have an account, then please feel free to [register](#) for

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