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Rituals of the Patriot Act Renewal

[Jesse Walker](#) | October 20, 2009

[Julian Sanchez](#) has a story in *The Nation* this week about the Patriot Act renewal -- the first time I can remember seeing a Cato writer in that journal since Ted Galen Carpenter published a kid lib piece there [in 1985](#). Here's the lede:

We know the rules by now, the strange conventions and stilted Kabuki scripts that govern our cartoon facsimile of a national security debate. The Obama administration makes vague, reassuring noises about constraining executive power and protecting civil liberties, but then merrily adopts whatever appalling policy George W. Bush put in place. Conservatives hit the panic button on the right-wing noise machine anyway, keeping the delicate ecosystem in balance by creating the false impression that something has changed. We've watched the formula play out with Guantanamo Bay, torture prosecutions and the invocation of "state secrets." We appear to be on the verge of doing the same with national security surveillance.

Read [the whole thing](#) for the details.