

asked by the Wall Street Journal how his company would respond to a request for help. He answered that because of the threat of lawsuits, quote: "I'm not doing it. I'm not going to do something voluntarily." In other words, the House's refusal to act is undermining our ability to get cooperation from private companies, and that undermines our efforts to protect us from terrorist attack.

Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell recently explained that the vast majority of the communications infrastructure we rely on in the United States is owned and operated by the private sector. Because of the failure to provide liability protection, he says, private companies who have "willingly helped us in the past are now saying, 'You can't protect me. Why should I help you?'" Senator Jay Rockefeller, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, puts it this way: "The fact is, if we lose cooperation from these or other private companies, our national security will suffer."

When Congress reconvenes on Monday, Members of the House have a choice to make: They can empower the trial bar, or they can empower the intelligence commu-

nity. They can help class-action trial lawyers sue for billions of dollars, or they can help our intelligence officials protect millions of lives. They can put our national security in the hands of plaintiffs' lawyers, or they can entrust it to the men and women of our Government who work day and night to keep us safe.

As they make their choice, Members of Congress must never forget: Somewhere in the world, at this very moment, terrorists are planning the next attack on America. And to protect America from such attacks, we must protect our telecommunications companies from abusive lawsuits.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10 a.m. on February 22 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 22, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Dinner for the National Governors Association Conference *February 24, 2008*

Good evening. Laura and I are honored to have you here, and it's a pleasure to be here with a lot of friends. You know, I've developed a unique perspective on this event. For 6 years, I sat and watched the President speak; for 8 years, I was the President and spoke. [*Laughter*] And next year, I'll be watching on C-SPAN. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Tim Pawlenty and Ed Rendell, for—serve as the chair and vice chair of the National Governors Association. I congratulate our two newest Gov-

ernors, Kentucky's Steve Beshear and Louisiana's Bobby Jindal. I might add, Jindal is not here, but he's ably represented by the first lady of Louisiana, Supriya. And I congratulate Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi for his reelection. I want to thank the Vice President and Lynne Cheney for joining us. I also tell you how thankful I am and honored we are that Vince Gill and Amy Grant have come tonight to entertain us.

I value our Governors because our Governors are some of the Nation's foremost

policy entrepreneurs. I appreciate what you do. I appreciate the sacrifice your families have made to serve America.

It was in that spirit that Teddy Roosevelt hosted the first Governors meeting here at the White House 100 years ago. I can't imagine what they were thinking about what America would look like 100 years ago, and I'm not sure what people will think 100 years from now. But I do know it makes sense to put wise policy in place

in the meantime so America can remain prosperous and strong and free.

And so tonight it's my honor to welcome you all and to offer a toast to the Nation's Governors.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota; Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; and entertainers Vince Gill and Amy Grant.

Remarks During a Meeting With the National Governors Association Conference

February 25, 2008

The President. Thank you very much. I'm supposed to stall to wait for the press corps. [Laughter] Chairman, thanks. Let me see your book there, will you? That thing right there, yes. Mr. Vice Chairman, thank you, sir. Hope you enjoyed last night.

Governor Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania. Yes, it was great.

The President. It was great, yes. It was fun. I am proud to announce to you that Janet Creighton is running the Intergovernmental Affairs Office for us. She looks forward to working with you. I look forward to hearing from you. There's a lot we can do to—for the next 10 months to work together. I like to tell people, you know, I'm going to finish strong, and I want to work with you as I do so.

A couple of areas I want to talk about, then I'll answer a couple of questions. And then evidently, we're going to have a 100th anniversary picture.

We share a responsibility to protect our country. I get briefed every morning about threats we face, and they're real. Now—and therefore, the question is, what do you do about them? In my judgment, we have got to give the professionals who work hard to protect us all the tools they need. To

put it bluntly: If the enemy is calling to America, we really need to know what they're saying, and we need to know what they're thinking, and we need to know what—who they're talking to.

It's—this is a different kind of struggle than we've ever faced before. It's essential that we understand the mentality of these killers. And so therefore, we worked with Congress to protect—pass the Protect America Act, which everybody knows has expired. And I want to share with you the core of the problem. And the problem is, should companies who are believed to have helped us, after 9/11 till today, get information necessary to protect the country be sued? And my answer is, absolutely not. They shouldn't be sued for a couple of reasons.

One, it's not fair. Our Government told them that their participation was necessary—and it was and still is—and that what we had asked them to do was legal. And now they're getting sued for billions of dollars, and it's not fair. And it will create doubt amongst private sector folks who we need to help protect us.

Secondly, such lawsuits would require disclosure of information, which will make