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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God of our forebears, Author of liberty, search our hearts and minds in order that we might better know ourselves. Lord, help us to comprehend what we need to better represent You. Empower us to live exemplary lives that are worthy of Your great love.

Give our lawmakers a renewed loyalty to protecting the freedoms that Americans hold dear. May our Senators use their stewardship of position and influence to ensure that America is a shining city upon a hill. May their highest incentive be not to win over one another but to win with one another by doing Your will for all.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I wish we had been able to move the cloture and amendment votes we will consider today to yesterday. I made an offer to do so because it is hard to see the point in allowing yet another day to elapse when everyone has already had a chance to say their piece, when the end game appears obvious to all, and when the need to move forward in a thoughtful but expeditious manner seems perfectly clear. But this is the Senate, and Members are entitled to different views and Members have tools to assert those views. It is the nature of the body where we work.

Moreover, it is important to remember that it was not just the denial of consent which brought us to where we are. The kind of short-term extension that would have provided the Senate with the time and space it needed to advance bipartisan compromise legislation through regular order was also blocked in a floor vote.

But what has happened has happened, and we are where we are. Now is the time to put all that in the past and work together to diligently make some discrete and sensible improvements to the House bill.

Before scrapping an effective system that has helped protect us from attack in favor of an untried one, we should at least work toward securing some modest degree of assurance that the new system can, in fact, actually work. The Obama administration also already told us that it would not be able to make any firm guarantees in that regard—that it would work—at least the way the bill currently reads. And the way the bill currently reads, there is also no requirement—no requirement—for the retention and availability of significant data for analysis. These are not small problems.

The legislation we are considering proposes major changes to some of our Nation's most fundamental and necessary counterterrorism tools. That is why the revelations from the administration shocked many Senators, including a lot of supporters of this legislation. It is simply astounding that the very government officials charged with implementing the bill would tell us, both in person and in writing, that if it turns out this new system doesn't work, then they will just come back to us and let us know. If it doesn't work, they will just come back and let us know. This is worrying for many reasons, not the least of which is that we don't want to find out the system doesn't work in a far more tragic way. That is why we need to do what we can today to ensure that this legislation is as strong as it can be under the circumstances.

Here are the kinds of amendments I hope every Senator will join me in supporting today.

One amendment would allow for more time for the construction and testing of a system that does not yet exist. Again, one amendment would allow for more time for the construction and testing of a system that does not yet exist.

Another amendment would ensure that the Director of National Intelligence is charged with at least reviewing and certifying the readiness of the system.

Another amendment would require simple notification if telephone providers—the entities charged with holding data under this bill—elect to change their data-retention policies. Let me remind my colleagues that one provider has already said expressly and in writing that it would not commit to holding the data for any period of time under the House-passed bill unless compelled by law. So this amendment represents the least we can do to ensure we will be able to know, especially in an emergency, whether the dots we need to connect have actually been wiped away.

We will also consider an amendment that would address concerns we have heard from the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts—in other words, the lifetime Federal judges who actually serve on the FISA Court. In a recent letter, they wrote that the proposed amicus provision ''could impede the FISA Courts' role in

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

protecting the civil liberties of Americans.''

I ask unanimous consent that the full text of that letter be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

So the bottom line is this: The basic fixes I have just mentioned are common sense. Anyone who wants to see the system envisioned under this bill actually work will want to support them. And anyone who has heard the administration's ''we will get back to you if there is a problem'' promise should support these modest safeguards as well.

We may have been delayed getting to the point at which we have arrived, but now that we are here, let's work cooperatively, seriously, and expeditiously to move the best legislation possible and prevent any more delay and uncertainty.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE
UNITED STATES COURTS,
Washington, DC, May 4, 2015.

Hon. DEVIN NUNES,
Chairman, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write regarding H.R. 2048, the ''USA Freedom Act,'' which was recently ordered reported by the Judiciary Committee, to provide perspectives on the legislation, particularly an assessment that the pending version of the bill could impede the effective operation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Courts.

In letters to the Committee on January 13, 2014 and May 13, 2014, we commented on various proposed changes to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Our comments focused on the operational impact of certain proposed changes on the Judicial Branch, particularly the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (''FISC'') and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review (collectively ''FISA Courts''), but did not express views on core policy choices that the political branches are considering regarding intelligence collection. In keeping with that approach, we offer views on aspects of H.R. 2048 that bear directly on the work of the FISA Courts and how that work is presented to the public. We sincerely appreciate the ongoing efforts of the bipartisan leadership of all the congressional committees of jurisdiction to listen to and attempt to accommodate our perspectives and concerns.

We respectfully request that, if possible, this letter be included with your Committee's report to the House on the bill.

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

We have three main concerns. First, H.R. 2048 proposes a ''panel of experts'' for the FISA Courts which could, in our assessment, impair the courts' ability to protect civil liberties by impeding their receipt of complete and accurate information from the government (in contrast to the helpful amicus curiae approach contained in the FISA Improvements Act of 2013 (''FIA''), which was approved in similar form by the House in 2014). Second, we continue to have concerns with the prospect of public ''summaries'' of FISA Courts' opinions when the opinions themselves are not released to the public. Third, we have a few other specific technical concerns with H.R. 2048 as drafted.

NATURE OF THE FISA COURTS

With the advent of a new Congress and newly proposed legislation, it seems helpful to restate briefly some key attributes of the work of the FISA Courts.

The vast majority of the work of the FISC involves individual applications in which experienced judges apply well-established law to a set of facts presented by the government—a process not dissimilar to the ex parte consideration of ordinary criminal search warrant applications. Review of entire programs of collection and applications involving bulk collection are a relatively small part of the docket, and applications involving novel legal questions, though obviously important, are rare.

In all matters, the FISA Courts currently depend on—and will always depend on—prompt and complete candor from the government in providing the courts with all relevant information because the government is typically the only source of such information.

A ''read copy'' practice—similar to the practices employed in some federal district courts for Title III wiretap applications—wherein the government provides the FISC with an advance draft of each planned application, is the major avenue for court modification of government-sought surveillance. About a quarter of ''read copies'' are modified or withdrawn at the instigation of the FISC before the government presents a final application—in contrast to the overwhelming majority of formal applications that are approved by the Court because modifications at the ''read copy'' stage have addressed the Court's concerns in cases where final applications are submitted.

The FISC typically operates in an environment where, for national security reasons and because of statutory requirements, time is of the essence, and collateral litigation, including for discovery, would generally be completely impractical.

At times, the FISA Courts are presented with challenging issues regarding how existing law applies to novel technologies. In these instances, the FISA Courts could benefit from a conveniently available explanation or evaluation of the technology from an informed non-government source. Congress could assist in this regard by clarifying the law to provide mechanisms for this to occur easily (e.g., by providing for precleared experts with whom the Court can share and receive information to the extent it deems necessary).

THE ''PANEL OF EXPERTS'' APPROACH OF H.R. 2048 COULD IMPEDE THE FISA COURTS' WORK

H.R. 2048 provides for what proponents have referred to as a ''panel of experts'' and what in the bill is referred to as a group of at least five individuals who may serve as an ''amicus curiae'' in a particular matter. However, unlike a true amicus curiae, the FISA Courts would be required to appoint such an individual to participate in any case involving a ''novel or significant interpretation of law'' (emphasis added)—unless the court ''issues a finding'' that appointment is not appropriate. Once appointed, such amici are required to present to the court, ''as appropriate,'' legal arguments in favor of privacy, information about technology, or other ''relevant'' information. Designated amici are required to have access to ''all relevant'' legal precedent, as well as certain other materials ''the court determines are relevant.''

Our assessment is that this ''panel of experts'' approach could impede the FISA Courts' role in protecting the civil liberties of Americans. We recognize this may not be the intent of the drafters, but nonetheless it is our concern. As we have indicated, the full cooperation of rank- and-file government personnel in promptly conveying to the FISA Courts complete and candid factual information is critical. A perception on their part that the FISA process involves a ''panel of experts'' officially charged with opposing the government's efforts could risk deterring the necessary and critical cooperation and candor. Specifically, our concern is that imposing the mandatory ''duties''—contained in subparagraph (i)(4) of proposed section 401 (in combination with a quasi-mandatory appointment process)—could create such a perception within the government that a standing body exists to oppose intelligence activities.

Simply put, delays and difficulties in receiving full and accurate information from Executive Branch agencies (including, but not limited to, cases involving non-compliance) present greater challenges to the FISA Courts' role in protecting civil liberties than does the lack of a non-governmental perspective on novel legal issues or technological developments. To be sure, we would welcome a means of facilitating the FISA Courts' obtaining assistance from non-governmental experts in unusual cases, but it is critically important that the means chosen to achieve that end do not impair the timely receipt of complete and accurate information from the government.

It is on this point especially that we believe the ''panel of experts'' system in H.R. 2048 may prove counterproductive. The information that the FISA Courts need to examine probable cause, evaluate minimization and targeting procedures, and determine and enforce compliance with court authorizations and orders is exclusively in the hands of the government—specifically, in the first instance, intelligence agency personnel. If disclosure of sensitive or adverse information to the FISA Courts came to be seen as a prelude to disclosure to a third party whose mission is to oppose or curtail the agency's work, then the prompt receipt of complete and accurate information from the government would likely be impaired—ultimately to the detriment of the national security interest in expeditious action and the effective protection of privacy and civil liberties.

In contrast, a ''true'' amicus curiae approach, as adopted, for example, in the FIA, facilitates appointment of experts outside the government to serve as amici curiae and render any form of assistance needed by the court, without any implication that such experts are expected to oppose the intelligence activities proposed by the government. For that reason, we do not believe the FIA approach poses any similar risk to the courts' obtaining relevant information.

''SUMMARIES'' OF UNRELEASED FISA COURT OPINIONS COULD MISLEAD THE PUBLIC

In our May 13, 2014, letter to the Committee on H.R. 3361, we shared the nature of our concerns regarding the creation of public ''summaries'' of court opinions that are not themselves released. The provisions in H.R. 2048 are similar and so are our concerns. To be clear, the FISA Courts have never objected to their opinions—whether in full or in redacted form—being released to the public to the maximum extent permitted by the Executive's assessment of national security concerns. Likewise, the FISA Courts have always facilitated the provision of their full opinions to Congress. See, e.g., FISC Rule of Procedure 62(c). Thus, we have no objection to the provisions in H.R. 2048 that call for maximum public release of court opinions. However, a formal practice of creating summaries of court opinions without the underlying opinion being available is unprecedented in American legal administration. Summaries of court opinions can be inadvertently incorrect or misleading, and may

omit key considerations that can prove critical for those seeking to understand the import of the court's full opinion. This is particularly likely to be a problem in the fact-focused area of FISA practice, under circumstances where the government has already decided that it cannot release the underlying opinion even in redacted form, presumably because the opinion's legal analysis is inextricably intertwined with classified facts.

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL COMMENTS ON H.R. 2048

The Judiciary, like the public, did not participate in the discussions between the Administration and congressional leaders that led to H.R. 2048 (publicly released on April 28, 2015 and reported by the Judiciary Committee without changes on April 30). In the few days we have had to review the bill, we have noted a few technical concerns that we hope can be addressed prior to finalization of the legislation, should Congress choose to enact it. These concerns (all in the amicus curiae subsection) include:

Proposed subparagraph (9) appears inadvertently to omit the ability of the FISA Courts to train and administer amici between the time they are designated and the time they are appointed.

Proposed subparagraph (6) does not make any provision for a ''true amicus'' appointed under subparagraph (2)(B) to receive necessary information.

We are concerned that a lack of parallel construction in proposed clause (6)(A)(i) (apparently differentiating between access to legal precedent as opposed to access to other materials) could lead to confusion in its application.

We recommend adding additional language to clarify that the exercise of the duties under proposed subparagraph (4) would occur in the context of Court rules (for example, deadlines and service requirements).

We believe that slightly greater clarity could be provided regarding the nature of the obligations referred to in proposed subparagraph (10). These concerns would generally be avoided or addressed by substituting the FIA approach. Furthermore, it bears emphasis that, even if H.R. 2048 were amended to address all of these technical points, our more fundamental concerns about the ''panel of experts'' approach would not be fully assuaged. Nonetheless, our staff stands ready to work with your staff to provide suggested textual changes to address each of these concerns.

Finally, although we have no particular objection to the requirement in this legislation of a report by the Director of the AO, Congress should be aware that the AO's role would be to receive information from the FISA Courts and then simply transmit the report as directed by law.

For the sake of brevity, we are not restating here all the comments in our previous correspondence to Congress on proposed legislation similar to H.R. 2048. However, the issues raised in those letters continue to be of importance to us.

We hope these comments are helpful to the House of Representatives in its consideration of this legislation. If we may be of further assistance in this or any other matter, please contact me or our Office of Legislative Affairs at 202–502–1700.

Sincerely,

JAMES C. DUFF,
Director.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly conference meetings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

USA FREEDOM ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2048, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2048) to reform the authorities of the Federal Government to require the production of certain business records, conduct electronic surveillance, use pen registers and trap and trace devices, and use other forms of information gathering for foreign intelligence, counterterrorism, and criminal purposes, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell/Burr amendment No. 1449, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell amendment No. 1450 (to amendment No. 1449), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 1451 (to amendment No. 1450), relating to appointment of amicus curiae.

McConnell/Burr amendment No. 1452 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 1449), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 1453 (to amendment No. 1452), to change the enactment date.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 2 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING HADIYA PENDLETON AND COMMEMORATING NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on January 29, 2013, Hadiya Pendleton was gunned down while standing in a park on the South Side of Chicago. Hadiya was a talented, beautiful, caring young woman with a bright future ahead of her. She was 15 years old, a sophomore honor student at King College Prep. Her family described her as a spectacular source of joy and pride for them.

One week before her death, Hadiya was here in Washington with her school band, performing for President Obama's second inauguration. She was thrilled by that opportunity. But a few days later, she was gone, murdered by men who mistook her and friends for members of a rival gang.

What a senseless tragedy to lose children to gun violence. It happens every day in America. Overall, on average, 88 Americans are killed by gun violence every day.

Today, June 2, 2015, would have been Hadiya Pendleton's 18th birthday. Today also marks the first annual National Gun Violence Awareness Day. It is an idea that was inspired by Hadiya's family and friends in Chicago. They decided they would ask us to wear something orange today. It is a color that hunters use when they are in the woods to make sure that no one shoots them.

All across the Nation, Americans are wearing orange in tribute to Hadiya Pendleton, in tribute to the tens of thousands of other Americans killed by gun violence every year, and in support of a simple goal: Keep our kids safe. I am proud to join them in wearing orange today. I want to commend Hadiya's parents—my friends—Nate and Cleo, her brother Nate, Jr., and her friends who have turned their pain into purpose.

They are working to reduce the scourge of gun violence and to spare other families and loved ones what they have gone through. I hope lawmakers here in Washington and throughout the Nation will pay attention and commit themselves to do something about these terrible shootings and deaths. We need to do all that we can to keep guns out of the hands of those who would misuse them and, especially, keep our children safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on our country on 9/11/2001—terrorist attacks that killed some 3,000 people—I authored legislation, along with former Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission to reform and restructure the intelligence community, to improve its capabilities, and also to increase accountability and oversight.

Now, this law is different and distinct from the PATRIOT Act. Our law established the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to coordinate all of the agencies involved in intelligence gathering so that we would reduce the possibility of the dots not being connected and to allow terrorist attacks and plots to be detected and thwarted.

Our legislation also created the National Counterterrorism Center, which helps to synthesize the information across government and share it with State and local governments to help keep us safer. Our bill created the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, and it installed privacy officers in the major intelligence agencies.

But our law, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Protection Act, shared the common goal of the PATRIOT Act of better protecting our Nation from terrorist attacks because none of us who lived through that terrible day