

know, are small and willful and do their darnedest, with volunteer help from the communities, to stay open, and they are critically important.

If you happen to live in rural Illinois, maybe you are a farm family, and there is a terrible accident that occurs on the farm. Driving 20 minutes versus driving an hour and 20 minutes can be life or death.

So the Republicans who want to cut \$1 trillion from Medicaid—\$1 trillion—and give tax breaks to wealthy people? Vote me no. Vote all the Democrats no. Those aren't the priorities of this country.

FISA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, when it comes to fraud, there is no excuse for it, but let's not overstate the obvious. Government Agencies across this country are doing the best they can in some instances but can always do better.

I don't think that we have a monopoly when it comes to virtue in our party or any other party. There are those who break the law and should be held accountable, and there are those who are doing their best to uphold the law, and they should be encouraged. To suggest that the Democrats are the party of fraud and the Republicans are the party of virtue—you know better than that. People in both political parties could have a tuneup when it comes to virtue, and I add myself to that list as well.

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, is a powerful tool for collecting information that has been abused for way too long. Most Americans would flunk the test of, what is FISA? what is 702?

Here is what it boils down to: We approve, under law 702, allowing our intelligence Agencies to collect the private communications of foreigners overseas without a warrant. Why? We suspect those foreigners are involved in activity that is not safe for the United States. Am I supportive of that? Count me in.

But section 702 enables surveillance of more than just foreigners overseas; millions of innocent Americans' texts, emails, and phone calls are swept up in this dragnet if they communicated with a foreigner. So if you find somebody in a foreign country whom you suspect of illegal or dangerous activity and you wiretap their telephone communication, the person on the other end of the phone may not be a foreigner but an American citizen.

Unfortunately, it turns out that thousands and thousands of American citizens have their texts and phone conversations tapped under section 702. Our intelligence Agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigations, puts these communications in searchable databases that they use to spy on Americans without a warrant.

The independent Privacy and Civil Liberties Board and the FISA Court have documented shocking abuses of

section 702 by our own government intelligence Agencies. And 702 has been used to spy on American religious leaders, American political parties, American journalists, and protestors from across the political spectrum. Such abuses have been documented under both Democrats and Republicans.

But the prospect of placing warrantless—that means no court approval ahead of time—surveillance power in the hands of this administration is particularly alarming. President Trump and his appointees have repeatedly weaponized the power of the Federal Government to target President Trump's perceived enemies.

Take Bill Pulte, President Trump's first choice to serve as the Acting Director of National Intelligence. Pulte currently serves as the Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, where he has pushed for criminal referrals against those who have angered President Trump, from New York attorney general Letitia James to Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook.

Even though Pulte himself has no—no—intelligence experience, President Trump chose him to lead our national intelligence apparatus and to help oversee that powerful section 702. The public outcry changed the President's mind. The President, after he heard from both Democrats and Republicans what a terrible choice Pulte would be, dropped him and now has nominated Jay Clayton, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, to serve as Director of National Intelligence.

This episode demonstrates the inherent danger of warrantless surveillance. No single branch of government in the United States should have unchecked power to spy on Americans, whether this power is in the hands of Bill Pulte; Jay Clayton; Kash Patel, the leader of the FBI; or whoever President Trump installs next.

Repeated efforts to rein in the abuses of section 702 with minimal reforms have failed time and time again. And now the Trump administration refuses to disclose the latest ruling from the FISA Court detailing ongoing abuses.

The long and ongoing history of abuse makes it clear that without checks from a separate branch of government, section 702 will always be at risk of abuse as a massive delegation of power to an executive Agency. That is why the drafters of the Constitution many years ago—250—decided that we should never have warrantless searches of Americans. They prohibited it.

It is time to stop tinkering around the edges of 702 and make meaningful changes once and for all. That is why I joined Republican Senator MIKE LEE of Utah to introduce the SAFE Act—a bipartisan bill in the Senate that would require the government to obtain a judicial warrant before searching Americans' communications collected under section 702. But Republican leadership have refused to hold a vote on the SAFE Act and instead have attempted

to extend FISA's authorization without any serious reform.

I have been through this many times since 9/11. I am obviously skeptical of this power being given to the government. And I have watched, when we find abuses, well-documented abuses, the limited reforms that are finally accepted, and they just don't do the job.

Let me give you, from the Brennan Center for Justice report, some numbers that tell the story.

Congress and the FISA Court have attempted to place some modest limits on the government's use of backdoor searches.

That is what they call it when Americans are swept up.

Intelligence agencies, and the [Federal Bureau of Investigations] in particular, have habitually violated those limits. In 2022, the FISA Court observed that "compliance problems with the FBI's querying of Section 702 information have proven to be persistent and widespread." Indeed, in March 2022, the government reported more than 278,000—

More than 278,000—noncompliant searches of information obtained through FISA.

These noncompliant searches would include eavesdropping on Americans without government approval—278,000.

Moreover, from 2018 through 2024, the law required the FBI to obtain a warrant before conducting backdoor searches in a very small subcategory of cases involving certain criminal investigations. Despite conducting dozens of such searches during that time, the FBI never once got a warrant.

As required by our Constitution.

The abuses continue, and there are those we know nothing about that are going on as of this day.

There was an investigation of the use of FISA, leading to a classified report, which I have seen myself in the Senate intelligence SCIF. Members of the Senate can have access to it, but the Trump administration refuses to make it public for the rest of America. That is unfortunate. It makes the argument that I believe is compelling in this case.

Republican leadership have refused to hold a vote on this reform measure Senator LEE and I have introduced. They have argued this program is just too essential to allow for any delay in reauthorization or consideration of real reforms.

Yet, just recently, President Trump said that before we reauthorize FISA, we have to agree to add his elections reform measure—the one that requires ID requirements before you can vote. Now, there are certain IDs which are easy, but in the original version of this bill that the President wants, driver's licenses, which we use all over the country, would not be acceptable.

Congress has time to get this right. Section 702 surveillance operates under yearlong certifications approved by the FISA Court, and it has already been recertified through March of next year, 2027. This means intelligence collection under 702 will be able to continue until next March even if the law technically expires this week—or last week.

But if my colleagues want to reauthorize section 702 quickly, there is a simple solution, and my colleague Senator WYDEN of Oregon made this point on the floor last week. We can bring reform to section 702 and give larger numbers to support it and its reauthorization. Support these commonsense, bipartisan reforms supported by a majority of American citizens to prevent 702 from being used to violate basic constitutional rights.

Unfortunately, our demands for reform have received no help from the President. He is more concerned with pushing the SAVE America Act, changing every election—his bill to make it harder for Americans to vote.

Over the weekend, President Trump announced that he opposes any FISA reauthorization that does not include Save America, as I mentioned. This act would slap undue burdens and excessive costs on Americans seeking to exercise their most fundamental right—the right to vote.

So why would the President support adding this measure to critical 702 reauthorization? Because he is afraid of the next election. That is what it comes down to. He is afraid his party is going to lose in November. He saw when he went to Texas and argued that the Republicans in control there should redraw all the congressional maps for the November election on the chance that the Republicans will pick up more seats. We will see what happens.

Section 702 must not be linked to President Trump's efforts to suppress the vote. Instead, Congress should reauthorize it with reasonable reforms, bipartisan reforms that protect our national security and safeguard America's constitutional rights.

Trump's campaign of retribution and attacks on America's ability to vote make this mission all the more important. We cannot allow a President consumed by vengeance to monitor Americans' private communications with no external checks or limits.

Our Nation's Founders understood this well, which is why they created the Fourth Amendment to safeguard Americans from government overreach into their lives. For too long, section 702 has jeopardized those protections, but we have a chance to end that abuse now.

Let's not wait any longer. Congress should reauthorize section 702 with sensible reforms and finally put an end to the unconstitutional surveillance of innocent American citizens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from North Carolina.

AV-8B HARRIER

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a significant milestone in Marine Corps aviation history. Earlier this month, on June 3, the AV-8B Harrier aircraft retired from combat after four decades in service.

Since the aircraft's introduction in 1985, the Harrier has symbolized the Marine Corps' elite operational mobility. Its vertical and short takeoff, combined with its landing capabilities, have enabled marines to operate from remote locations and ships around the world. From supporting missions in diverse environments, including Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf, the jump jet has proven itself to be a reliable aircraft time and time again.

The Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock, NC, is home to the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, and it has served as the center of the Harrier community for over 40 years. Under the command of Lt. Col. John Cumbie at VMA-223—the final Harrier squadron—all pilot training and daily operations have taken place in Havelock, making the Harrier a familiar presence.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to fly over Eastern North Carolina in a Harrier jet with Maj. Lucas Pumphrey, Maj. Eric Scheibe, and Brig. Gen. Shannon Brown. Experiencing the aircraft's capabilities firsthand offered a powerful reminder that behind every mission are exceptional marines whose skill, discipline, and dedication to duty make these operations possible and help preserve the security of the United States and our allies.

The AV-8B Harrier has retired from service, but it will be preserved at STARBASE STEM education center at Cherry Point, where it will be on display for the public. This transition from a warfighting aircraft to a prominent piece of military history will continue to inspire generations to come.

Mr. President, please join me in honoring the Harrier, its storied history at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, and the brave marines that flew the AV-8B.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

21st CENTURY ROAD TO HOUSING ACT

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, Nebraska is the best place in the world. Nebraska is where Americans want to be. And just recently, U.S. News just said Omaha, our largest city, is the second best place in the country for recent college grads. This is a wonderful recognition of what great quality of life we have in Omaha.

And as we welcome all the new college grads, it also reminds us that we have got more work to do with regard to housing. Housing is something that we need to make more affordable for Americans. Just 10 years ago, the average age of a new homeowner was 31 years old. Today, the average age of a new homeowner is 40.

About 25 percent of the cost of a new home is regulation and redtape. And, actually, for an apartment building it is even worse—it is 40 percent. I was talking to an apartment builder in Omaha, and he described to me how when he first got into building apart-

ment buildings, he could build an apartment for about \$15,000 and now the cost is well over \$200,000.

Now, this is not a new issue. When I was Governor of the great State of Nebraska, this was something we worked on as well. In fact, I worked with my legislature to introduce the Rural Workforce Housing Act. We put about \$7 million into a grant program which allowed rural communities to be able to partner with developers to be able to help build homes or apartment buildings.

The way it often worked is that the community would create a low-interest fund that developers would apply to—oftentimes using it, for example, as a bridge loan—build the housing development and then pay off the loan so the money could be recycled back into the next loan to help build more houses.

It was very successful, and we ultimately added more money to that program and then created the Middle Income Housing Fund as well to be able to help out cities like Omaha.

Here in the Senate, I continue to bring this Nebraska solution to the rest of America. We are working on our ROAD to the 21st Century Housing Act. In fact, this is something that has passed both the Senate Banking Committee and on the House side as well, and I want to commend Chairman SCOTT for the great work he has done working with both sides of the aisle to receive their input to create the ROAD to the 21st Century Housing Act.

This is a bill that will help cut that regulatory redtape I was describing earlier. It includes several of the bills that I have introduced, including the Streamlining Rural Housing Act.

So this bill, in particular, what it does is requires Housing and Urban Development and USDA to work together. Both these Agencies will have grant money to help build homes. And a homeowner won't be able to take money from both of those, but what happens is—they both have their own permitting and review process, which often will be done in serial and creates more regulatory redtape and bureaucracy. What my bill does is require them to work together to streamline that process to be able to make it faster.

And this is something that, again, is part of the theme of many of the bills that we have put together into this ROAD to 21st Century Housing to be able to make the process easier. If we can build more homes faster and there are more homes available, that will help bring down the cost of housing. It is a pretty simple concept.

In addition to the Streamlining Rural Housing Act, I have got a number of bills that are also included in the ROAD to the 21st Century Housing Act, including the Rural Housing Regulatory Relief Act. This was one that MIKE FLOOD, who is the First District Congressman from Nebraska, brought up in the House.

Also Improving Housing Access Act; Housing for America's Middle Class