

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

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Don't Rush Legislation Aimed at Plugging Leaks, Groups Say

TCP: Balance between protecting national secrets and preserving open and accountable government is essential

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Open government advocates have asked Congress to think twice about a bill aimed at plugging recent leaks of classified national security information and to avoid rushing it through without adequate public debate.

In a letter to the leaders of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees [released earlier today](#), 30 advocacy organizations from across the ideological spectrum urged the Senate to abandon a plan announced last week to attach language to address leaks of classified information to the Fiscal Year 2013 intelligence reauthorization bill.

"Providing tough safeguards to prevent disclosure of legitimate national security secrets clearly ought to be a top priority for the Congress, but not at the expense of an informed public and an open and accountable government," said Sharon Bradford Franklin, senior policy counsel at The Constitution Project, a bipartisan watchdog group and one of the organizations signing the letter.

"Reaching the proper balance between preventing unauthorized disclosure of classified information on the one hand, and protecting freedom of speech and the public's right to know what their government is doing on the other, will necessarily require more careful consideration than the Congress can achieve in the heat of the moment," she said.

In their letter, the groups noted that legislation to address the issue of leaks should take into account reform of the classification system, so that the system is not overburdened with information that does not require rigorous protection, and should ensure that the civil liberties and free speech rights of government employees are preserved.

During a press conference last week, leadership of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees outlined a plan to attach language to address recent leaks of classified national security information to the pending intelligence reauthorization bill. The House-passed version does not include the new language, but they proposed to have the Senate include it in its version, and for leadership to ensure the language is included in the final legislation sent to the president.

In addition to The Constitution Project, the letter was signed by, among others, the American Civil

Liberties Union, the American Library Association, the Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Common Cause, the Federation of American Scientists, the Liberty Coalition, the National Whistleblowers Center, OpenTheGovernment.org, and the Society of Professional Journalists.

A copy of the letter with a full list of signers is available at: <http://www.constitutionproject.org>.

About The Constitution Project

Created out of the belief that we must cast aside the labels that divide us in order to keep our democracy strong, The Constitution Project (TCP) brings together policy experts and legal practitioners from across the political spectrum to foster consensus-based solutions to the most difficult constitutional challenges of our time. TCP seeks to reform the nation's broken criminal justice system and to strengthen the rule of law through scholarship, advocacy, policy reform and public education initiatives. Established in 1997, TCP is based in Washington, D.C.



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