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Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

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*Affiliations listed for
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July 24, 2013

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Constitution Project, I write to urge you to support a critical amendment to the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, HR 2397, regarding the scope of the NSA's authority to collect Americans' information under the Patriot Act. The amendment sponsored by Representative Justin Amash (R-MI) and Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) would rein in the recently revealed program under which the NSA collects the phone records of millions of Americans who have no connection to terrorism.

The Amash/Conyers amendment would prevent the NSA from using funds to conduct bulk collection of phone records, or other bulk data, under Section 215 of the Patriot Act. Long before the recent leaks regarding NSA surveillance programs, The Constitution Project's Liberty and Security Committee had urged in its [Statement on Reforming the Patriot Act](#) that Congress *tighten* the standards for collection of information under the Patriot Act. The Amash/Conyers amendment would limit the current broad interpretation of the law by requiring that Section 215 orders be limited to information that pertains to the specific subject of an authorized counterterrorism investigation. Thus, the government could continue to use Section 215 for its intended purpose of targeting people with known or suspected connections to terrorism.

In addition to requesting your *support* for the Amash/Conyers amendment, we also urge you to vote *no* on the Nugent amendment which has been offered as a substitute. That amendment would only reinforce the current overbroad interpretations of the Patriot Act and would not solve the problem of the NSA's bulk collection of innocent Americans' records.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Virginia E. Sloan