

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Hearing On
“The Surveillance Transparency Act of 2013”
November 13, 2013**

Revelations about the National Security Agency’s dragnet collection of Americans’ telephone records has led to an important national conversation about the scope of our government’s intelligence-gathering authorities. Today, the Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law will consider legislative changes to increase the transparency of the government’s surveillance activities. As a cosponsor of the Surveillance Transparency Act, I thank Senator Franken for his leadership on these issues and for holding this hearing.

While I appreciate recent efforts by the administration to release documents and be more forthcoming about its surveillance activities, we must codify expanded reporting requirements to ensure accountability. The Surveillance Transparency Act would require enhanced government reporting about requests for information from private companies under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the USA PATRIOT Act. The legislation would require the government to report annually to the public on the number of surveillance orders issued to private companies and the types of information sought. Additionally, the bill would compel the government to produce public reports on the number of Americans whose information was collected and reviewed by government officials.

The bill also would permit companies to disclose voluntarily more information about the types of requests for user information they receive from the government. Under the legislation, companies would be allowed to reveal the number of orders they received and complied with; the general types of information that were furnished; and the number of users whose information was provided to the government for each type of surveillance request. I strongly believe that this enhanced transparency will help to inform the public debate about the breadth of the government’s surveillance authorities.

The intelligence community faces a serious trust deficit. More transparency is one important step toward rebuilding that trust. But transparency alone is not enough. To completely restore faith in the intelligence community and global confidence in America’s technology companies, we must make significant substantive reforms to our surveillance laws – to stop the dragnet collection of innocent Americans’ phone records and place appropriate safeguards on a whole range of surveillance authorities.

That is why last month, I introduced the bipartisan, bicameral USA FREEDOM Act. I was pleased to incorporate important transparency provisions derived from the Surveillance Transparency Act into that legislation. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today and appreciate the letter from more than 60 Internet companies and advocacy groups supporting expanded transparency and accountability reforms in the Surveillance Transparency Act.

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