

March 17, 2003

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to oppose the Domestic Security Enhancement Act (DSEA), legislation whose existence was revealed in draft form on Friday, February 7, 2003.

Like all Americans, we are deeply concerned by the continuing terrorist threats against our country, and like a growing number of Americans of every political persuasion, we are also worried that the DSEA, if enacted, would be the wrong remedy for this ongoing problem. Our reservations are based on our shared belief that the United States' efforts to protect the country and punish those who were responsible for the September 11 attacks are best served by legislation that is directly focused on appropriate, responsible and effective anti-terrorism measures.

Legislation that fails to respect our time-honored liberties, or focuses on efforts unconnected to fighting terrorism, detracts from this crucial mission. The DSEA is that sort of legislation.

The draft bill contains a multitude of new and sweeping law enforcement and intelligence gathering powers, many of which are not related to terrorism, that would severely dilute, if not undermine, many basic constitutional rights, as well as disturb our unique system of checks and balances. If adopted, the bill would diminish personal privacy by removing important checks on government surveillance authority, reduce the accountability of government to the public by increasing government secrecy, expand the definition of "terrorism" in a manner that threatens the constitutionally protected rights of Americans, and seriously erode the right of all persons to due process of law.

We encourage you to make clear to the American people that you would not support such legislation, or any other legislation unnecessarily expanding the powers the government has already obtained in the USA PATRIOT Act. Instead, we recommend that you ask the Administration to provide Congress and the public more information about its use of the powers already granted in the USA PATRIOT Act.

We recognize that the threat of terrorism is very real, and that combating this danger is a preeminent objective for the nation. To that end, however, we oppose the approach taken in the Domestic Security Enhancement Act and urge you to seek solutions that make America safer without diminishing our country's fundamental freedoms.

Sincerely,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
American Association of Law Libraries  
American Baptist Churches USA  
American Civil Liberties Union

American Conservative Union  
American Humanist Association  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Library Association, Washington Office  
American Policy Center  
Americans for Tax Reform  
Arab American Institute  
Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund  
Asian Americans for Equality  
Association of American Physicians and Surgeons  
Association of Research Libraries  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for Democracy and Technology  
Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law  
Center for Justice and Accountability  
Center for National Security Studies  
Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights  
Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism  
Common Cause  
Consumer Action  
Doctors for Disaster Preparedness  
Electronic Privacy Information Center  
First Amendment Foundation  
F.I.R.S.T. Project, Inc.  
Free Congress Foundation  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Gun Owners of America  
Hate Free Zone Campaign of Washington  
Immigrant Defense Project of the New York State Defenders Association  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
International Institute of Boston  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Korean Resource Center  
Latin American Integration Center  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights  
Lawyers Committee for Human Rights  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)  
Multiracial Activist  
National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)  
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
National Coalition Against Repressive Legislation  
National Council of La Raza

National Employment Law Project  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Lawyers Guild  
New York Immigration Coalition  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
OMB Watch  
Organization of Chinese Americans  
People for the American Way  
Police Accountability Project  
Presbyterian Church USA, Washington Office  
Special Libraries Association  
Square One Media Network  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America  
Washington Defenders Immigration Project  
Women Against War  
Young Korean-American Service & Education Center (YKASEC)