

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 Americans for Equality
Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund
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)