

want it broadcast to al Qaeda and radical jihadists about what your capabilities are. You want to use it as an effective tool. But on a bipartisan basis, the leadership of the House and the Senate and the leadership on a bipartisan basis of the Intelligence Committees in the House and Senate signed off on these programs.

The current Speaker of the House was briefed four times in the 8, 9 months immediately after 9/11, and you know what? Number one, now she's not bringing to the floor the very changes that she supported in the aftermath of 9/11, but the companies that we went to and asked them for their help. And when these companies said we know the administration is supportive of this, have Members of Congress been informed, the administration could truthfully say, yes, they have been briefed. They've been informed. They know what we're going to ask you to do, what information we expect to get and how we expect that to keep America safe. They're now throwing them under the bus.

But the more important thing is the urgency of today. We need these companies to help us. They help us all the time. And we're having a chilling effect on these types of American businesses that in many ways are helping us in basic law enforcement activities, not only radical jihadists but basic law enforcement, because they're now being told if you help us, recognize that in many cases we're going to throw you to the wolves, which in this case are the trial lawyers.

I appreciate my colleagues having this discussion and debate. Thank you very much for allowing me to be a part of this. I need to get going. I was hoping I could say I'm going to a meeting where we are going to work out the final details on FISA, but now that's not the case. I've got to go to a different type of meeting. But thank you very much for furthering the effort on this very, very important issue.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you for bringing greater clarity to that, Mr. HOEKSTRA.

And before you joined us, I read and inserted into the RECORD a letter from 25 State attorneys general talking about the importance of FISA, a bipartisan group of individuals across this Nation who have the responsibility of keeping their States safe. And they understand and appreciate the imperative of this.

Again, this gets so confusing to the American people because the people that apparently don't want this to pass want the American people to be confused. This is pretty simple, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I yield.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Do you know why those attorneys general wrote the letter? Because it's affecting the local governments' ability to do surveillance on people from Mexico who are in this

country illegally, drug lords and others. It's affecting our local governments' at-home ability to do this surveillance. It's not just al Qaeda and the terrorists. This is affecting our local law enforcement too.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. It's affecting the information that they're able to get. But it's communication from a foreign individual on foreign soil to another foreign individual on foreign soil. This is not between an American individual on American soil to another American individual on American soil.

Mr. Speaker, when it's confused and brought into kind of a perplexing dilemma for people and talking about the violation of Americans' civil rights, that's not what this is about. This is about protecting Americans from terrorists overseas. And what we have seen in the last 19 or 20 days is exactly what Senator ROCKEFELLER knew when we see, when he said on February 14 of this year: "What people have to understand around here is that the quality of intelligence we are going to be receiving is going to be degraded." He said, stating before the Senate, that if this bill is not passed, the ability to gather intelligence will be degraded. Mr. Speaker, that means that we are not able to get the intelligence we need.

We are now 19, 20 days into not having this bill in place, not having this law in place. And why? I have difficulty when I get asked at home that question. My constituents, many of them, will say, why won't they pass the bill? A majority of the House wants it. Right? And that's correct. Twenty-one Members on the Democrat side have said they would vote for the bill. The vast majority, if not everybody, on the Republican side would vote for the bill. Mr. Speaker, you know, that's a majority of this House of Representatives. So let the House work its will.

Why won't they bring it up? The only rationale, the only reason that has made any sense to anybody, is purely political. Purely political, either to continue the issue for their left, liberal wing because they believe they could gain political points with it or the political nature of not making it so the communications companies have immunity from the information that they provide on foreign individuals, terrorists overseas communicating with other terrorists overseas, providing those individuals the same protections that we have under the United States Constitution.

Never before has that been done. Never before have we provided individuals in a foreign land, non-American citizens in a foreign land, the rights, privileges, and protections of the United States Constitution. Because of the trial lawyer lobby and because of the trial lawyer support for the majority party, the Democratic Party, that's apparently the only reasonable answer to the question, Why won't they allow this to come forward?

But, Mr. Speaker, the leadership has recognized, at least they say they have

recognized, the importance of this issue. Just 6 days ago, the majority leader said: "This is a very serious, important bill. It's critical to the defense of our country." Just last week he said this. Why, then, Mr. Speaker, are we not voting on it today? It's 4:25. There's no reason that we ought not have brought this bill up today or yesterday or the day before or tomorrow. But, Mr. Speaker, no, the House has gone home.

Individual after individual has appreciated and recognized the importance of this bill, that the terrorists, those who want to do us harm, are very nimble. They're very flexible. They're very bright. Members of the House of Representatives oftentimes have the opportunity to go to Iraq and to Afghanistan. I was talking to a colleague who was there just 11 days ago. That's just a week into when we didn't have this capability. And 11 days ago, this Member of this body, this House of Representatives, was told by a general on the ground in Iraq that the information they were receiving was not as of high quality as it had been the week before. Changes occur that rapidly in the ability to gain information.

Mr. Speaker, some say that the individuals representing them across this Nation are incapable of leading this Nation anymore. Some say that the actions of this House of Representatives border upon treasonous activity. Mr. Speaker, this isn't leadership that's going on in this House right now; it's an abrogation of duty. It's an abrogation of responsibility. It's a violation of the people's trust. It's a violation of the oath of office. Mr. Speaker, the American people are demanding that this be voted on and that it be voted on at the first opportunity, which now becomes next week.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate Republicans have voted "yes." The Senate Democrats have voted "yes." The House Republicans will vote "yes" when given the opportunity. The House Democrat leadership is the only thing standing in the way of passing the Protect America Act and securing and defending this Nation in only the way that we can now, with appropriate intelligence capability. We must do that and we must do that as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2008

Mr. SERRANO (during the Special Order of Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning-hour debate; and further, when the House adjourns on Wednesday, March 12, it adjourn to meet at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 13.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YARMUTH). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.