

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA-03), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security on the House Judiciary Committee, spoke on the House Floor today in support of the FISA Amendments Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 213 to 197 ( [Roll No. 145](#) ).

Below is Congressman Scott’s full Floor statement:

“Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairs of the Judiciary and Intelligence Committees for their efforts in addressing warrantless surveillance under the Foreign Intelligence and Surveillance Act and for introducing legislation that addresses the national security challenges presented by global terrorism.

“This legislation provides that any wiretap which would be legal under the President’s proposal will be legal under this legislation. It merely requires, under some circumstances, that a warrant be obtained prior to the wiretap- or if there is an emergency, after the wiretap begins. This legislation does not balance civil liberties with national security- all of the wiretaps are permitted, this legislation just provides a little oversight.

“The idea of wiretaps without oversight has to be considered in the context of some recent developments at the Department of Justice. Republican appointed officials have accused this administration of firing US Attorneys, because they did not indict Democrats in time to affect an upcoming election. We have been unable to ascertain the truth of the allegation for several reasons. For example: high ranking administration officials questioned the credibility of Attorney General Gonzalez’s original response to the allegations; one high-ranking Justice Department official quit and another pleaded the fifth; and White House officials have refused to respond to subpoenas. And it is this Justice Department seeking unprecedented authority to wiretap citizens without traditional oversight and without even articulating the primary purpose of the wiretaps.

“Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, this legislation does not offer retroactive immunity for illegal activities. The fact is that the telephone companies, which may benefit from this retroactive immunity, already have immunity for any reasonable actions they may have taken, and this legislation provides a procedural change to ensure that these claims of immunity can be properly considered.

“In summary, this legislation provides all of the national security protection sought by the President, but it also provides modest protection of our civil liberties. We should therefore support this legislation.”

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