

Government Surveillance Transparency Act of 2013

Introduced by Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02)

The Bill:

The Government Surveillance Transparency Act allows private companies required to comply with orders or directives under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978 to publicly report certain aggregate information related to the requests of information from the Executive Branch and the FISA Court every 90 days.

Background:

- In early June, newspaper reports revealed the existence of classified data collection programs being conducted by the National Security Agency.
- These data collection programs, authorized by section 215 of the USA PATRIOT ACT and section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, lack transparency on both their size and scope.
- Many questions remain on whether data on Americans is being collected, on the number of data requests the government has made of private technology and telecommunications companies, on the criteria the government uses to gain information through the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, and on the kind of information the government is requesting of these companies.
- Many technology and telecommunication companies currently publish transparency reports detailing how many government requests they receive for user data, but, by law, those reports cannot include requests from the FISA court.
- The Government Surveillance Transparency Act of 2013 will allow those companies that receive FISA court orders or directives to regularly report these statistics, ensuring greater privacy and security of their users' data.
- Under this Act, companies may disclose: (1) the aggregate number of orders or directives being requested from the FISA court; (1) a general description of what types of assistance, information, or tangible things companies were required to provide pursuant to such orders or directives; (1) the aggregate number of each type of assistance, information, or tangible things companies were required to provide pursuant to such orders or directives; and (4), the aggregate number of user accounts impacted by FISA court orders or directives.
- This commonsense bill strikes the proper balance between transparency and national security.

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