

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**We've summarized below some of the issues we discussed today.
Always feel free to let us know if you want more information. Thank you!**

GOVERNMENT SPONSORED TORTURE

Summary: After years of denial, President Bush has admitted he knew about and approved of his closest advisors meeting in the basement of the White House to discuss the use of horrific interrogation methods on detainees held in United States custody.

The decision to use torture on detainees was a deliberate and planned act. While those who followed orders are marched off to jail, the highest-ranking White House officials who reportedly authorized the use of torture have gone unpunished.

Torture violates the fundamental values on which our country was founded. The United States has historically led the fight against torture around the world — speaking out against inhumane treatment of prisoners and offering refuge to victims of other governments' atrocities. In addition, Congress has enacted four statutes and ratified two treaties that prohibit the use of torture.

Status: Four years after the abuses of Abu Ghraib came to light, Congress is beginning to investigate the role of the highest-ranking White House officials in the use of torture by our government.

Recommendation: Because torture was reportedly authorized by the highest-ranking White House officials, including the vice president and Cabinet secretaries, we ask that Members of Congress 1) thoroughly investigate the use of these tactics and whether criminal laws were broken; and 2) demand the attorney general appoint a special counsel to investigate what crimes were committed and hold those responsible accountable.

FISA AND THE FOURTH AMENDMENT

Summary: Our Fourth Amendment rights are in jeopardy as the president continues to pressure Members of Congress to legalize his warrantless wiretapping program and to give the telecommunications carriers a get-out-of-jail-free card. We are less than a year away from having a new president, and there is no reason to grant sweeping powers now.

Status: Both the House and Senate have passed their own versions of the FISA Amendments Act but they continue to disagree on details. We continue to oppose any bill that would impede our Fourth Amendment rights including the Senate bill which lets the telecoms off the hook for their lawbreaking.

Recommendation: We believe that neither the House nor the Senate version of the FISA Amendments Act should be passed. Rather, FISA, in its current form, should remain the standard for wiretapping in the United States. We also ask Congress to refuse to provide immunity to the telecommunications companies that illegally helped the administration spy on our calls and e-mails.

EMPLOYEE VERIFICATION

Summary: Proposals are making their way through Congress that would dramatically expand the government's flawed "E-Verify" program — requiring every employer in the United States to verify the eligibility of every current and prospective employee, including United States citizens.

E-Verify is currently used by only a fraction of our nation's employers, but its database errors and bureaucratic bungling have caused enormous financial losses for employers and would bar millions of Americans from working. The program also places an incredible strain on an overburdened Social Security Administration.

Status: Legislation making E-Verify mandatory is currently attached to several bills, including the Shuler/Tancredo SAVE Act (H.R. 4088). In addition, there is a discharge petition being circulated on the SAVE Act.

Recommendation: We ask Members of Congress to 1) oppose the SAVE Act (H.R. 4088) or any similar measure containing employment verification language; 2) refuse to co-sponsor and/or remove their names as co-sponsors of the SAVE Act; and 3) decline to sign and/or remove their names from the SAVE Act discharge petition. We also ask lawmakers to support legislation mandating the government clean up its error-ridden databases before any verification programs become law.



For more information on these and other issues please visit our website at www.aclu.org

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BECAUSE FREEDOM CAN'T PROTECT ITSELF

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