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**Sens. Franken & Heller’s Measures to Strengthen Surveillance Transparency Included in NSA Reform Bill**

*Franken-Heller Surveillance Transparency Act Was Model for Provisions in USA FREEDOM Act*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - Today, U.S. Sens. Dean Heller (R-NV) and Al Franken (D-MN) announced their measures to increase transparency over government surveillance programs were included in the USA FREEDOM Act, a key NSA reform bill introduced today in the Senate by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

Because of Sens. Heller’s and Franken’s efforts, the USA FREEDOM Act will help give the American people the information they need to make up their own minds about the nation’s surveillance programs.

The Senators’ transparency provisions force the government to release the number of people who have had their communications information collected under these surveillance programs, and the number of those people who were likely Americans. And they would also give American companies greater flexibility to tell their customers approximately how many of them were caught up in government surveillance requests. Combined, these provisions will give Americans a way to verify for themselves that bulk collection is in fact over.

Said Sen. Heller, **“The government has grossly overreached with its surveillance practices, and as a result, Americans’ distrust of their own government continues to grow. Congress can take immediate steps to fix that by increasing transparency and improving reporting practices.  I’m extremely pleased that my colleagues have been willing to work with me and Senator Franken to include our provisions in the latest draft. More must be done, and the USA Freedom Act is a comprehensive approach that would end bulk data collection practices and help restore privacy rights to our nation’s citizens. I hope that the Senate can move swiftly to vote on this bill.”**

**“Americans understand that we need to give due weight to privacy, on the one hand, and national security, on the other,”** said Sen. Franken. **“But when they lack even a rough sense of the scope of the government’s surveillance programs, they have no way to know if the government is getting that balance right. There needs to be more transparency.** **Our provisions will let the American people get the information they need to hold their government accountable.”**

Sens. Heller and Franken introduced the *Surveillance Transparency Act*in 2013 to expand and improve ongoing government reporting about programs under the *PATRIOT Act* and the *Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act* that have been the subject of controversy. You can read more about it [here](http://www.franken.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=2590).

While both the House and Senate versions of the USA FREEDOM Act included transparency provisions modeled after *Surveillance Transparency Act*, many of these provisions were dropped in the run-up to the House’s passage of the bill. The Senators successfully fought to get them back into the final Senate bill.

Sen. Heller is an original cosponsor of the USA FREEDOM Act. He [also testified](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/videos?ID=0a0991ee-3d8e-4d80-bdc5-cae9c13238c7) at a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law on behalf of the *Surveillance Transparency Act of 2013*.

Sen. Franken, Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law, is a strong advocate of increased transparency in government surveillance programs. In 2011 and 2012, he cosponsored legislation to ensure greater oversight and transparency around federal surveillance programs. When these measures did not pass, Sen. Franken voted against reauthorizing key NSA surveillance programs created under the *PATRIOT Act* and the *Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendments Act*.

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