



Congressman

# Jim Sensenbrenner

## News from Congress

Number 178 - April 2008

### What's Inside...

- FISA Update
- Office Hours
- Cap-and-Trade Bill
- Town Hall Meeting Schedule
- Flag Coupon

# Why Congress Needs To Update The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act



Would you go to bed at night with the front door to your home wide open? How about unlocked, with the keys still in the lock? Well, that's analogous to the situation our nation currently finds itself in as a result of recent actions – or inactions – by the leadership in the House of Representatives.

In 1978, Congress enacted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to establish a statutory procedure to authorize the use of electronic surveillance in the United States for foreign intelligence purposes. On February 16 of this year, the Protect America Act, which was enacted last year to update sections of FISA, expired at 11:59pm. With it, the US lost protections that were available to our intelligence community in order to overcome obstacles in FISA, and to monitor and intercept terrorist communications.

The reason this is important is because of the ongoing national debate on the actions of telecommunication companies after September 11, 2001. The issue here is whether these private telecommunication companies should be protected from class action lawsuits, based on roles they played in assisting the federal government, as it retaliated after the terrorist attacks six and a half years ago.

At the time, the federal government assured these companies of the legality of their cooperation in defense of the nation. This was critical, because the government had no idea when the next attack would occur. We had just seen two buildings in New York collapse, and the Pentagon attacked. Planes across the nation were grounded, with the exception of jet fighters. Television stations went black, and, most importantly, over 3,000 people died. The government needed *immediate* assistance, and the way to get it was to go directly to the telecommunications companies and enlist their aid.

Now, however, instead of thanking these companies for their help, there are some in Congress who believe they overstepped their bounds. As a result, they want to subject these companies to litigation brought forth by lawsuit-happy groups. To put it mildly, this is a dreadful idea.

Changing the rules of an agreement after the fact sets a bad precedent, and does nothing to encourage future cooperation between corporations and the federal government. Moreover, proceeding with these lawsuits would expose the methods by which these communication corporations were able to assist the government with preventing further attacks on our country. This would make life more difficult for our intelligence agencies, as it would essentially provide terrorists with all of our strategies, allowing them to easily avoid detection in the future.

Some have argued that we don't need the cooperation of these companies, and that the existing 1978 FISA law provides the means for US authorities to do their job. That is not the case. Advances in science and technology over the past 30 years have made FISA out of date, just like the leisure suits that were all the rage when FISA was enacted into law. Think for a moment about how far we have come since 1978, with the invention of the flat screen high definition TV, Blu-ray discs, and cell phones that have become so inexpensive and ubiquitous, you can purchase one from a drug store, and dispose of it after one phone call. This is precisely why Congress passed the Protect America Act last year, to modernize FISA, and maintain the integrity of the law. But that was a temporary bill, and time ran out in the middle of February.

Congress has a responsibility to do all within its power to protect the American people from terrorist threats, just like the government did after 9/11. The Senate has followed through on this commitment, and has passed a bipartisan compromise by an overwhelming vote of 68 to 29 that has the support of a majority in the House. But it is a minority, comprised mostly of Members of the new leadership in the House, that is currently delaying and obstructing this bipartisan compromise by preventing a vote. And it is this minority that needs to understand that in order for Americans to sleep more soundly and safely at night, we need to shut and lock the door by updating FISA.



Congressman Sensenbrenner is pictured here in a room in the Rayburn House Building with students from Milwaukee's Messmer High School, as they question him about the legislative process and his duties as a Member of Congress.

## Flags Flown Over the US Capitol

A new United States flag flown over the U.S. Capitol with a personally signed certificate is available at cost (including postage) from my office. If you would like to place an order, please make your check or money order payable to "**Sensenbrenner Office Supply Account**" and send it along with this order form to the address below. Please allow 4 to 8 weeks for processing and delivery of your order. Limit 3 per household.

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Number	Size	Price	Total
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	5' x 8' nylon	\$28.25	\$
Grand Total			\$

Please place your order promptly if you want to purchase flags at these prices. If the flag office of the U.S. Capitol makes any changes to these prices, I will be required to return your check as they have to be made out in the exact amount.

# Cap-And-Trade Bills Are Not The Answer

In a vain effort to control climate change, many members of Congress are pushing a global warming bill, known as “cap-and-trade,” that will raise electricity and gas prices throughout Wisconsin. Even worse, this legislation will do little to improve the environment, despite its costs.

Cap-and-trade measures claim to address global warming by placing caps on carbon emissions from fossil fuels, and requiring utilities and companies to meet these limits by reducing their emissions over time, or by trading credits with other companies that come in under their limit. This system will undoubtedly create a vast new government bureaucracy, and investment bankers will have plenty of opportunity to profit from the trading.

The majority of Americans however, will see a hidden tax increase which will be quietly inserted into rising electric and gas bills. Wisconsin, particularly, will be harder hit than other states. That’s because nearly two-thirds of Wisconsin’s electricity is generated from coal. But states like Illinois, which derives more of its electricity from nuclear power, will be able to benefit at the expense of states like Wisconsin. If energy is cheaper in Illinois, it stands to reason that that’s where the jobs and businesses will go.

Cap-and-trade has been tried in Europe for nearly three years now, and it’s produced little in the way of environmental benefits. One study, conducted by a European think-tank, shows that greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise in Europe under this system - and that’s not to mention rising electricity rates as well. Another study conducted in the US last year, shows that cap-and-trade could cost the average household up to \$1,300 a year, and could lead to the loss of 3.4 million jobs.

Clearly, these measures are not the solution. To achieve significant greenhouse gas reductions, our focus should lie in new technologies that will one day be readily available and relatively inexpensive. That includes renewable technologies like wind and solar power, along with improvements in energy efficiency. It should also include proven greenhouse gas reducing technologies like nuclear power, which in Wisconsin, only supplies about 20 percent of the state’s electricity. Ultimately, we have two climates to be concerned with – one environmental, and the other economic. There is no question of one or the other; we can, and must, have both.



# Office Hours

# Town Hall Meetings

## Monday, April 7th

8:30am Helenville Fire Hall  
9:15am Sullivan Village Hall  
10:00am Palmyra Village Hall  
11:00am Dousman Village Hall  
11:45am Genesee Town Hall  
12:30pm Wales Village Hall  
2:00pm Nashotah Village Hall  
2:45pm Merton Town Hall  
3:30pm Merton Village Hall  
4:15pm Pewaukee Public Library

## Friday, April 11th

10:00am Butler Village Hall  
11:00am Lannon Village Hall  
11:45am Sussex Village Hall  
1:45pm Jackson Village Hall  
2:45pm Addison Town Hall  
3:30pm Kewaskum Village Hall

## Monday, April 21st

9:00am Bayside Village Hall  
9:45am Fox Point Village Hall  
10:30am River Hills Village Hall  
11:30am Saukville Village Hall  
1:30pm Belgium Village Hall  
2:15pm Fredonia Village Hall  
3:00pm Newburg Village Hall

## You're Invited...

I host scores of Town Hall Meetings and Office Hours to provide you the chance to express your views on the issues before Congress or to help you with problems you may be experiencing in dealing with a federal agency. This newsletter includes my schedule of meetings for the next several weeks, and I invite you to attend one or more of them. Whether you need help or not, I hope you'll stop by to say hello and introduce yourself. Please contact my District office if you require special accommodations to attend.

### Saturday, April 5th

9:00am Delafield City Hall  
1:00pm West Allis Public Library

### Sunday, April 6th

7:00pm Menomonee Falls Public Safety Building

### Saturday, April 12th

9:00am Brown Deer Village Hall  
1:00pm New Berlin City Hall

### Sunday, April 13th

1:00pm Cedarburg Police Department

### Saturday, April 19th

9:00am Grafton Village Hall  
1:00pm Waukesha Public Library

### Sunday, April 20th

1:00pm Oconomowoc City Hall

### Monday April 21st

7:00pm Hartford City Hall

### Saturday, April 26th

9:00am Germantown Village Hall  
1:00pm Thiensville Village Hall

### Sunday, April 27th

1:00pm Brookfield Public Safety Building

### Monday, April 28th

7:00pm West Bend City Hall

### Saturday, May 3rd

1:00pm Wauwatosa Public Library

### Sunday, May 4th

1:00pm Slinger Village Hall

### Sunday, May 18th

7:00pm Hartland Village Hall

### Sunday, June 1st

7:00pm Shorewood Village Hall

### Monday, June 2nd

7:00pm Mequon Public Safety Building

### Sunday, June 8th

7:00pm Pewaukee City Hall

### Monday, June 16th

7:00pm Port Washington Police Department

### Sunday, June 22nd

7:00pm Whitefish Bay Village Hall

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**To write about issues or request publications, contact me at:**

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TEL: (202) 225-5101

**To get help with federal agencies, contact me at:**

120 Bishops Way, #154  
Brookfield, WI 53005-6294

TEL: (262) 784-1111

**Outside Metro Calling Area:**

(800) 242-1119

**E-Mail:**

[http://sensenbrenner.house.gov/  
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