

# Patriot act, pros and cons

Government



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The Patriot Act was signed into law by President Bush in response to the tragedy of the events of 9/11. This report explains the issues that warranted this law, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the Patriot Act of 2001. Passed in the weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks, the law expanded the government's powers in anti-terrorism investigations. And as expected, controversy is always an issue when such laws are passed. The Patriot Act is no exception. Although the law was designed to counter terrorism within the borders of the United States, some provisions of this law are controversial due to infringements on civil liberties.

The following are a list of pros and cons based on information provided by the United States Department of Justice, and ACLU. The Pros:

- Allows law enforcement to use surveillance against more crimes of terror
  - Law enforcement can conduct investigations without tipping off terrorists • Federal agents ask a court for an order to obtain business records in national security terrorism cases
  - The Patriot Act facilitates information sharing and cooperation among government agencies so that they can better “ connect the dots. • The Patriot Act reflects new technologies and new threats
  - Law enforcement officials may obtain a search warrant anywhere a terrorist-related activity occurs
- The Cons
- FBI can demand “ any tangible thing,” including books, letters, diaries, library records, medical and psychiatric records, financial information, membership lists of religious institutions, and genetic information without your knowledge or consent a. The FBI needs only to tell a judge

(no need for evidence or probable cause) that the search protects against terrorism.

- The judge has no authority to reject this application.
- Section 213: a. It expands the government's ability to search private property without notice to the owner
- Violates the 1st and 4th Amendments to the Constitution
- Does not work: a. 0 out of 5, 000 suspects detained for terrorism have been convicted Opponents of the Patriot Act argue that this law was pushed through Congress with some measure of haste and opportunistic tones.

The debate and controversy will obviously continue as is with most laws passed within the halls of the United States Congress. As guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States with respect to the right of protest, the Patriot Act will continue and amendments will surely follow. The act's own framers admit that it reduces peacetime liberties but argue that it must continue in order to fight terrorists.

As is the case with a law such as the Patriot Act, once it is implemented the government is always reluctant to relinquish its additional powers regardless of whether or not the original threat that prompted the act still exists. Such laws are sometimes viewed as too harsh or simply appalling and sometimes a person feels that his or her privacy is being violated. Sometimes all one has to do is to remember the tragic events of 9/11 to renew their sense of well being, security, and the freedom that is afforded by this great nation, the United States of America.