

AFTER MEETING WITH OBAMA, BOB GOODLATTE CALLS FOR REFORM OF PHONE DRAGNET

Bob Goodlatte, the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, voted against the Amash-Conyers Amendment that would have defunded the phone dragnet. Nor is he a named cosponsor of the USA Freedom Act, the Leahy-Sensenbrenner bill that would reform the dragnet.

Which is why it is particularly notable that he's the one member of Congress cited by name in a story reporting on skepticism that Obama will actually reform the NSA.

President Obama met with hand-picked lawmakers at the White House on Thursday to discuss the National Security Agency's controversial spying programs, the main event of a week full of meetings at the White House focusing on potential reforms for the maligned federal agency.

[snip]

At least some of the lawmakers left the meeting unconvinced that the president is going to do enough to curtail the NSA's activities. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., said "it's increasingly clear that we need to take legislative action to reform" the NSA's intelligence gathering.

"If the president believes we need a bulk collection program of telephone data, then he needs to break his silence and clearly explain to the American people why it is needed for our national

security,” Goodlatte said in a statement. “Americans’ civil liberties are at stake in this debate.”

If the President has not yet been able to convince Goodlatte the phone dragnet is necessary, if Goodlatte walks out of meeting with the President calling to legislatively roll back the phone dragnet, it might just have a shot at passing.

Update: Here’s Goodlatte’s full statement.

Over the course of the past several months, I have urged President Obama to bring more transparency to the National Security Agency’s intelligence-gathering programs in order to regain the trust of the American people. In particular, if the President believes we need a bulk collection program of telephone data, then he needs to break his silence and clearly explain to the American people why it is needed for our national security. The President has unique information about the merits of these programs and the extent of their usefulness. This information is critical to informing Congress on how far to go in reforming the programs. Americans’ civil liberties are at stake in this debate.

With each new revelation of the scope of these programs, it’s increasingly clear that we need to take legislative action to reform some of our nation’s intelligence-gathering programs to ensure that they adequately protect Americans’ civil liberties and operate in a sensible manner. We also need to ensure the laws are clear so that the U.S. tech industry is not disadvantaged vis-à-vis their foreign competitors. The House Judiciary Committee, which has primary jurisdiction over the legal framework of these programs, has

conducted aggressive oversight on this issue and will be instrumental to reforming the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. I am committed to working with members of Congress and Senators from both political parties, House leaders, and President Obama to ensure our nation's intelligence collection programs include real protections for Americans' civil liberties, robust oversight, and additional transparency. [my emphasis]