

R Street welcomes introduction of USA FREEDOM Act legislation

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WASHINGTON (April 28, 2015) – The R Street Institute welcomed today’s introduction of bipartisan legislation intended to curb the National Security Agency’s bulk collection of communications records.

The USA FREEDOM Act, introduced in both the House and Senate today, would end bulk collection of Americans’ telephone metadata and require the NSA to comply with significant new transparency requirements and FISA Court reforms.

“Leading Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate deserve immense credit for taking this important first step to rein in our government’s overreaching surveillance programs,” said Mike Godwin, R Street Institute’s general counsel and director of innovation policy.

“This legislation is not perfect by any means, but we support the efforts of groups working to refine this bill,” Godwin said. “This year’s USA FREEDOM Act counts as the first major success in our efforts to curtail indiscriminate government surveillance and bring it in line with fundamental constitutional values.”

R Street will continue to push for greater oversight, transparency and accountability of U.S. intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, Godwin said.

“It’s important to hold the NSA, and government agencies in general, to account. Our conservative view is that there should be no more blank checks for surveillance of American citizens,” Godwin said. “We endorse this measure for the same reason we oppose Sen. Mitch McConnell’s legislation to re-empower the NSA to conduct bulk collection without accountability.”

Godwin also cautioned that more work is needed to rectify other privacy concerns that are not addressed in the USA FREEDOM Act, such as retention of records on everyday Americans.

“Previous legislation introduced in this area would have required the government to limit retention of data collected about individuals who are not in any way associated with a foreign power or with a criminal suspect,” Godwin said. “Congress should keep that and other issues of privacy in mind while continuing to shape national-security legislation.”