

Telecommunications Companies Respond to Committee Inquiry into NSA Wiretapping Program Participation

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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Washington, D.C. — Three telecommunications companies have provided responses to inquiries by the Committee on Energy and Commerce about their involvement with the National Security Agency warrantless wiretapping program. On October 2, Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee, Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, and Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, sent letters to AT&T, Verizon and Qwest, requesting that the telecommunications companies provide details on the reported efforts by government agencies to obtain information about customers' telephone and Internet use.

"After reviewing the thoughtful responses of the phone companies to our inquiries about the Administration's NSA program, I am now convinced that the Administration — as the sponsor of this program and the party preventing the companies from defending themselves — is the entity best able to resolve the many outstanding issues," said Dingell. "I look forward to meeting with representatives of the Administration in short order, and I am hopeful that they will be forthcoming with the information Congress needs to

properly evaluate this program.”

"The responses from these telecommunication companies highlight the need for Congress to continue pressing the Bush administration for answers. The water is as murky as ever on this issue and it’s past time for the administration to come clean," said Markey.

“I am pleased by the timely response from these companies and thank them for their cooperation,” said Stupak. “While I recognize the unique legal constraints the telecommunications companies face regarding what information they may disclose, important questions remain unanswered about how the Administration induced or compelled them to participate in NSA’s eavesdropping program. Through our ongoing investigation, I will continue working with Chairmen Dingell and Markey to pursue answers to these questions.”

In May 2006, it was widely reported that some large phone companies participated in a government surveillance program by allowing U.S. government agencies access to millions of their customers’ telephone records without the customers’ knowledge or consent. Qwest was reportedly approached by the government but declined to participate. The Director of National Intelligence has since acknowledged the existence of the program.

Dingell, Markey and Stupak sent additional letters to privacy advocate groups, including the Electronic Privacy Information Center, American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Democracy and Technology. In the letters, the members solicited the groups’ opinions on the effects of the increasing number of government databases including citizens’ personal information, and the likelihood that these databases could be used for alternate purposes.

[AT&T response »](#)

[Verizon response »](#)

[Qwest response »](#)

[Electronic Frontier Foundation response »](#)

[Computer and Communications Industry Association response »](#)

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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