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2-15-05
SS-19

The USA PATRIOT Act is not the first in the history of this country to abridge our civil liberties in the name of national security. There was the Sedition Act of 1798, the Espionage Act of 1917, and the Smith Act of 1940. Also let us not forget the McCarthy Era and also the famous FBI COINTELPRO from 1956-1971. All of these were regrettable, as was the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans in World War II. Some sections of the USA PATRIOT act are far worse than all of these previous civil rights abuses.

These previous attacks on our civil rights, though severe, were only temporary. The majority of the USA PATRIOT Act is permanent with other parts that very well could become permanent. This is what makes it so dangerous to us as individuals and to us as a nation.

So let us ask ourselves "Are those that oppose the USA PATRIOT Act or some of its more grievous sections unpatriotic?" No. In fact they are patriotic by this very opposition. What is patriotism? Webster's defines it as "love for or devotion to one's country." What is it we love and cherish about this country? It is our freedoms. And what are those freedoms? They are those rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights and the body of the constitution itself. So those who oppose the Act are indeed patriots.

In the last two - three years, several Montana communities passed resolutions on civil rights. These city/county commissioners saw these resolutions not as unpatriotic but indeed as a patriotic action. This resolution would reaffirm our civil rights, the same ones that they as elected officials are sworn to uphold. Although this resolution does not guarantee that our civil rights will not be violated, it is reassuring to know that some of our elected officials acknowledge our civil rights and that these rights should not be abridged. We should not have to live in fear while exercising these rights that have been guaranteed by an authority higher than those who would take them away from us. This higher authority is the Constitution itself.

I hope that we can lead this issue of civil liberties vs. terrorism in the right direction. With this said, I would like to close with a quote. This is from Benjamin Franklin in 1759.

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

I urge you to pass SJ 19

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