Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R.

514, which would reauthorize expiring provisions of the Patriot Act

without important modifications necessary to safeguard our civil

liberties. While the threat of terrorism is real, and law enforcement

must have the right tools to protect Americans, any counterterrorism

measure must have a solid constitutional footing and respect the

privacy and civil liberties of the American people.

This legislation fails to address shortcomings in the original

Patriot Act legislation, and for that reason I will vote against it.

One of the major problems with this bill is its failure to address the

issuance and use of national security letters. These letters permit the

government to obtain the communications of anyone deemed relevant to a

terrorism investigation, even if that person is not suspected of

unlawful behavior. If Congress reauthorizes these provisions with no

changes, Americans will remain subject to warrantless intrusions into

their personal affairs--a gross overreach of Federal investigative

authority that could be abused. It's just not how we do things in this

country.

Rather than taking the time to craft reforms that will better protect

private citizens' communications and privacy from overbroad government

surveillance, the Republican majority simply wants to cram this bill

through without providing any opportunity for anyone to offer

amendments that improve the bill. We all acknowledge that law

enforcement needs new tools to keep up with 21st century threats; but

surely it is the responsibility of Congress to reexamine legislation

that was hurriedly passed through Congress in the wake of 9/11 to make

sure it lives up to our national ideals.

Because this bill fails to contain any checks and balances to prevent

law enforcement abuse and protect civil liberties, I will be voting

against it, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 7\1/2\ minutes

remaining.