Since the dawn of our country, our individual rights and the constitution have been tried and tested many times. Lincoln asked, from his speech to Congress in July of 1861, “Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?” This question has burdened our leaders from the ratification of the Constitution, the U.S. Civil War, to the current War on Terrorism. Today, as technology advances, laws are being modified to adapt to the modern world, expanding into the cyber space, limiting our basic freedoms. We the people must decide the balance between government protection and individual’s rights.

Over the years, the U.S. has been securing the American way of life while simultaneously defending national security. Balancing these necessities can sometimes be tedious but necessary. One example of the balance tipping toward stronger government protection in cyber space is the “internet kill switch” proposed by Lieberman. Using methods such as this, merely sacrifices liberty for a limited time but is relevant in order to protect our freedom. The problem with this concept is what parameters to set to prevent the abuse of power.

In order to avert abuse, certain circumstances must be met to exercise the privilege of extended authority. One example would be a full scale cyber-attack similar to the attack on Estonia in 2007 that froze their internet, immobilized their telecommunications, and ultimately shutdown the country. Another example is a natural disaster such as hurricane Katrina. These are models of catastrophic events that warrant the restriction of some individual rights, but are some of those liberties too important to sacrifice?

Some liberties or rights cannot be taken away no matter what situations unfold. Rights such as, the right to petition the government, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and above all, the right to privacy should not be restricted. These basic freedoms afford people the right to advocate change when the government over steps it bounds while protecting their private individuality therefore, ensuring the people maintain power. In the Gettysburg address Lincoln states that “the government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from earth.” By ensuring these rights are not infringed upon, the government of the people will not perish from the earth.

The United States has secured our country’s safety while maintaining the American way of life. In order to have both, we must sacrifice certain freedoms to ensure the nation’s survival. The use of boundaries aids the people to confine the government thus preventing them from abusing their power to restrict liberties. As mentioned before, there are some rights that must be preserved no matter what situation arises. These basic freedoms support the people’s rights to advocate change where they see harm imposed by their government. If and when all of these aspects come into play, balance between government protection and individual’s rights can be guaranteed.