

STOP THE “THOUGHT CRIME” BILL: S. 1959



The “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007” was recently passed by the House (H.R. 1955) and is now with the Senate (S. 1959). This bill ostensibly creates a Commission to study radical beliefs and recommend steps to prevent terrorist acts, but it may well lead to the defining of people who hold “out of the mainstream” beliefs, and people who engage in non-violent political protest and dissent, as “terrorists”. It may also lead to regulation of content on the internet, and increased warrantless surveillance of innocent Americans.

The National Lawyers Guild, Society of American Law Teachers, Center for Constitutional Rights, the ACLU and millions of Americans oppose the current language of this bill, dubbed the “Thought Crime” Bill. There are already State and Federal Laws against planning and committing violent acts; there is no need for laws that will not stop or help prosecute acts of hate/violence, but will chill 1st Amendment-protected speech and dissent. The FBI, CIA and non-governmental organizations have already done extensive research on radical/violent ideologies; there is no need to give political ideologues \$22 million to do research that will be redundant at best, and is likely to be detrimental to Liberty.

If you support our Rights to Free Speech, a Free Press, to Petition the government for redress of grievances, and to be secure against unreasonable searches and seizures, call your Senators today, to express your opposition to the dangerous and un-Constitutional language in this bill.

National Lawyers Guild

<http://nlg.org/news/index.php?entry=entry071127-093332>

“On October 23, 2007, the House of Representatives passed the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007 by a vote of 404-6... The National Lawyers Guild and the Society of American Law Teachers strongly oppose this legislation because it will likely lead to the criminalization of beliefs, dissent and protest, and invite more draconian surveillance of Internet communications...

“This bill would establish a Commission to study and report on “facts and causes” of “violent radicalism” and “extremist belief systems.” It defines “violent radicalism” as “adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change.” The term “extremist belief system” is not defined; it could refer to liberalism, nationalism, socialism, anarchism, communism, etc.

““Ideologically based violence” is defined in the bill as the “use, planned use, or threatened use of force or violence by a group or individual to promote the group or individual’s political, religious, or social beliefs.” Thus, “force” and “violence” are used interchangeably. If a group of people blocked the doorway of a corporation that manufactured weapons, or blocked a sidewalk during an anti-war demonstration, it might constitute the use of “force” to promote “political beliefs.”

“The bill charges that the Internet “has aided in facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process in the United States by providing access to broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda to United States citizens.” This provision could be used to conduct more intrusive surveillance of our Internet communications without warrants.

“This legislation does not criminalize conduct, but may well lead to criminalizing ideas or beliefs in violation of the First Amendment. By targeting the Internet, it may result in increased surveillance of Internet communications in violation of the Fourth Amendment.”

Center for Constitutional Rights

<http://ccrjustice.org/learn-more/faqs/factsheet%3A-violent-radicalization-and-homegrown-terrorism-prevention-act-2007>

American Civil Liberties Union

<http://www.aclu.org/safefree/general/32886prs20071128.html>

The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act

by Phillip Giraldi, published by The Huffington Post

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/philip-giraldi/the-violent-radicalizatio_b_74091.html

Here Come the Thought Police

by Ralph E. Shaffer and R. William Robinson, published by The Baltimore Sun

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bal-op.thoughtpolice19nov19,0,2384977.story>