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## Congress: Between Two Rocks and a Hard Place on NSA Spying

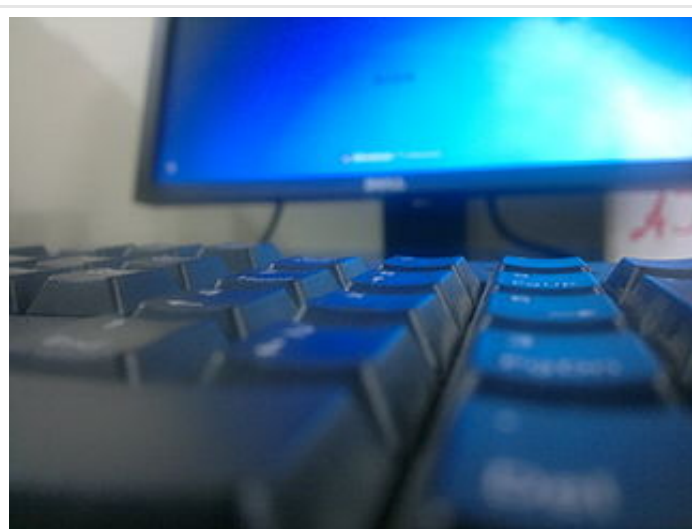
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The evidence reported in the past two days would suggest that the matter of NSA spying will become a big battle in Congress over the coming period, though how it will play out is yet to be determined. There are three tracks: First, there are those who responded with dismay or even anger at the latest revelations from documents disclosed by whistleblower Edward Snowden, [\(that the NSA broke privacy rules thousands of times since 2006 according to an internal audit\) as reported in the Washington Post on Aug. 15 \[1\].](#) Then there's the growing anger of constituents being expressed at town hall meetings and other venues towards their representatives. Thirdly are the Obama clones in the Congress who are still trying to cover his ass.

It's clear that the revelations about the NSA's spying are having a cumulative effect. Even House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Ca.), who had previously helped to organize Democratic opposition to the Amash amendment to defund the NSA's spying program, found the latest news that the NSA had broken its own privacy rules over 2,700 times "extremely disturbing." Amash, himself, said in a statement issued on Saturday, that "This is what happens when you have secret laws, no meaningful oversight and people in charge who think the Constitution wasn't written for them."

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Or.) told *Rolling Stone* in an interview published on Aug. 15, that "I'm not sure those at the highest level have really come to see the implications of their not being straight with Congress."

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, announced that he would be holding hearings on the NSA after Congress comes back into session in September. He told an interviewer in Vermont that there are better ways of blocking the terrorist threat than just spying on every single American. "I want to know if the NSA has made a mistake, we ought to know that," he said. "If they are tapping into people's telephones where they have no right to, we ought to know that. And if they are spending



Fears of broad NSA overreach have been justified.

huge amounts of money to collect data, but not doing anything to make us safer, we ought to know that."

Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC) told Fox News that he doubts any members of Congress were ever briefed on the NSA's privacy violations. "I have a sneaking suspicion the number is zero," he said. "That's how many of my colleagues were told ahead of time before we had to learn from a leaker to a newspaper that there were thousands of violations." Gowdy added that he's been hearing an uproar of dissatisfaction and distrust from the voters in his district and that Congress needs to take serious steps to fix its oversight capabilities of the types of highly secretive operations carried out by the NSA. "If we don't get that figured out, I'm not worried about winning elections, I'm worried about the republic," he said.

Gowdy is not the only one who has heard about the NSA scandal from voters in his district. According to a lengthy report in *Politico*, many have. Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) got hit at a recent meeting he held in Silver Spring, Md., by protestors with signs that read "VAN HOLLEN WRONG ON NSA: Restore the 4th!" Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), an anti-big government conservative from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, said that at a recent town hall meeting he held, he found himself "diverting" from the key economic issues to answer questions on the NSA. Representatives Zoe Lofgren (D-Ca.) and Jim Langevin (D-RI) are also named as two more members having to deal with question about the NSA at public events in their districts.

And then there are the skills for Obama, particularly Senate Intelligence Committee chairman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and her counterpart in the House, Mike Rogers (R-Mich.). Feinstein issued a statement on Friday, in which she claimed that "The majority of these 'compliance incidents' are... unintentional and do not involve any inappropriate surveillance of Americans. Rogers likewise similarly declared that "The disclosed documents demonstrate that there was no intentional violation of the law and that the NSA is not collecting the email and telephone traffic of all Americans..."

### **Links:**

[1] [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-broke-privacy-rules-thousands-of-times-per-year-audit-finds/2013/08/15/3310e554-05ca-11e3-a07f-49ddc7417125\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-broke-privacy-rules-thousands-of-times-per-year-audit-finds/2013/08/15/3310e554-05ca-11e3-a07f-49ddc7417125_story.html)

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