



Opponents of the NSA's Domestic Spying Programs To Hold Their Own Hearing

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Opponents of the NSA spying program in the House of Representatives plan to hold their own, ad hoc hearing, next Wednesday on Capitol Hill. Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) told the London Guardian that the administration and the intelligence community have had ample opportunity to tell their side but Congress has hardly had any chance to hear from critics.

"I have been concerned about the fact that we have heard incessantly in recent weeks from General Keith Alexander [director of the NSA] and Mr. James Clapper [director of National Intelligence] about their side of the story," he said. "We have barely heard anything in Congress from critics of the program. We have put together an ad hoc, bipartisan hearing on domestic surveillance in the Capitol. We plan to have critics of the program come in and give their view from the left and the right."

Grayson said that the effort has the support of Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.), the sponsor of the anti-NSA amendment that was only narrowly defeated on the house floor two days ago. "Mr. Amash has declared an interest in the hearing," Grayson said. "There are several others who have a libertarian bent — largely the same people who represented the minority of Republicans who decided to vote in favor of the Amash amendment." According to the Guardian, Grayson led the effort to organize support among Democrats for the Amash amendment. "Both Congress and the American people deserve to hear both sides of the story," he said. "There has been constant misleading information — and worse than that, the occasional outright lie — from the so-called intelligence community in their extreme, almost hysterical efforts, to defend these programs."

This will be the first time, in recent memory, that such an ad hoc hearing has been held in Congress on a bipartisan basis. During the G.W. Bush years, when Republicans controlled both houses of Congress as well as the presidency, the Democrats, through either the Senate Democratic Policy Committee or the Democratic Caucus in the House, held numerous unofficial "oversight" hearings on the policies of GOP-controlled White House. That Democrats are now joining with Republicans in such an ad hoc effort, in opposition to the police-state policies of the current Democratic occupant of the White House, is another indication of the disgust among a growing number of Democrats with President Obama.

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