

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement following the passage of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendments Act in the House. Hinchey voted against the measure.

"The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act has been in effect since 1978 and provided every president and his administration since that time with the tools and resources needed to effectively monitor the activities of those wishing to harm the United States. I recognize the need to modernize our surveillance laws and have been willing to make adjustments to improve them, but sacrificing our basic civil liberties and granting de facto immunity to telecommunication companies that may have violated the law to appease the Bush administration is simply unacceptable.

"The United States government should have all the tools it needs to keep us safe, but we must recognize that we can definitely achieve that goal without sacrificing the defining principles of the Constitution. Privacy rights must not be compromised simply because this administration is trying to scare everyone into believing such actions are necessary.

"What we need to remember here is that it's not just a matter of possessing surveillance data; it's about reading it, using it to make informed decisions, and carrying out subsequent actions to protect America. That is something that the Bush administration failed to adequately do prior to September 11. We must do everything to keep America safe while also staying true to our country's core values."