

CONYERS TO HOLDER: GIVE US THE 215 INFO

I guess I'm not the only one who noticed that DOJ is trying to reauthorize Section 215 without leveling with the American people how they're using it. John Conyers, Jerrold Nadler, and Bobby Scott have written Eric Holder, requesting that he make more information on the way Section 215 is used public.

In order to meaningfully consider whether and how to extend the "business records" section of the Act, however, we ask that the Department work to provide additional public information on the use of that provision.

Specifically, at the September 22 hearing, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Hinnen testified that orders under Section 215 of the Act, which authorizes compulsory production of "business records," have been used to obtain "transactional information" to support "important and highly sensitive intelligence collection." He explained that some members of the Subcommittee and cleared staff have received some briefings on this topic, and that additional information could be made available to them "in a classified setting."

We have appreciated the information that has been provided, and fully understand the importance of safeguarding our country's national security secrets. Too often in 2007 and 2008, however, crucial information remained unknown to the public and many members of Congress when Congress voted on important surveillance legislation affecting the interests of all Americans. As has also been requested in the Senate, we ask that the Department work to make publicly

available additional basic information on the use of Section 215, so that Congress can more openly and thoroughly consider the future of this authority while fully protecting our national security secrets.

I'm hoping they have more leverage than Russ Feingold, who I believe made this request in the Senate, since nothing is going to pass through HJC without these three gentlemen's involvement.