

5 DEMOCRATS HAVE CALLED ON OBAMA NOT TO REAUTHORIZE THE DRAGNET TOMORROW

Tomorrow is dragnet day, the next 90-day reauthorization for the dragnet.

In advance of that date, Pat Leahy just called on President Obama to simply let the dragnet end.

The President can end the NSA's dragnet collection of Americans' phone records once and for all by not seeking reauthorization of this program by the FISA Court, and once again, I urge him to do just that. Doing so would not be a substitute for comprehensive surveillance reform legislation – but it would be an important first step.

Leahy joins 4 other Democrats who have already called for the President to unilaterally stop the dragnet.

At a hearing last month, Adam Schiff suggested to DIRNSA Mike Rogers that they move forward without waiting for a new law.

“There's nothing in statute that requires the government to gather bulk data, so you could move forward on your own with making the technological changes,” Schiff said. “You don't have to wait for the USA Freedom Act.”

There's no reason for the NSA to wait for congressional approval to put additional limits on the program “if you think this is the correct policy,” Schiff added. “Why continue to gather the bulk metadata if [Obama administration officials] don't think this is the best approach?”

And back in June, Senators Wyden, Udall, and Heinrich not only made a similar suggestion in a letter to the President, but laid out how Obama could achieve what he says he wants to without waiting for legislation.

But the President is not going to end the dragnet. Heck, for all we know, FISC has already signed the reauthorization.

Mind you, it may be that President Obama can't start the new-and-improved dragnet without offering providers immunity and compensation. But if Obama can't simply end the dragnet without offering telecoms and second level contractors broad immunity, then he's obviously planning on something more exotic than just regular phone contact chaining.