

PREDICTABLY, SAXBY CHAMBLISS MAKES A BID FOR USA FREEDUMBEST

I've written several times about how HR 3361 – what others call USA Freedom Act and I dubbed the USA Freedumber Act when it was gutted in the House – is worse than the status quo in a number of ways.

But I'm also aware that the Senate could make it worse. I'm still waiting to see what kind of surprises Dianne Feinstein has in store for Thursday's Senate Intelligence Committee hearing.

So I am thoroughly unsurprised that Ranking Republican Saxby Chambliss wants to make Freedumber worse.

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) said the surveillance reform bill that passed the House last month goes too far in ending some of the National Security Agency's (NSA) sweeping surveillance programs.

"I actually think they went a little bit too far on the bulk collection side of it," Chambliss – the top Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee – said Tuesday while speaking at a Bloomberg event on cybersecurity.

I actually think this is a calculated move to add various transparency measures that Pat Leahy will respond to, but open up the floodgates to a full Internet-and-smart-phone dragnet. It will allow those who've gotten badly played in this negotiation an opportunity to declare victory even as the dragnet gets even worse.

Add this to the evidence this is all a big play:

Chambless said that he and Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.) and ranking member Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.) will be able to reconcile any differences between the House bill and a reform bill that comes out of the Senate.

"I'm confident that Rogers, Ruppersberger, Dianne and I can bridge that gap quickly if we can get a bill out of the Senate," he said.

The Gang of Four is just working to get to Conference, where they already seem to have in mind what they'll produce.

Before we're done, we're sure to see USA Freedumbest.