

## **Problems for Patriot Act: Renewal Due and Not Many Takers**

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[\*http://www.thiscantbehappening.net/2005.04.01\\_arch.html#1112713353729\*](http://www.thiscantbehappening.net/2005.04.01_arch.html#1112713353729)

### **Grassroots Resistance Movement Against USA PATRIOT Act Grows**

**Dave Lindorff**

**Tuesday, April 5, 2005**

According to records maintained by an organization called the Bill of Rights Defense Committee , as of April of this year, 372 towns, cities and counties, and five of the 50 states, have passed laws in one way or another declaring themselves to be "Patriot Act free zones."

These states and communities, which collectively include 57 million people, or nearly a quarter of the U.S. population, are as diverse politically as they could possibly be. The states, for example, include Alaska, Montana and Maine, all staunchly or moderately conservative and Republican, and Vermont and Hawaii, both liberal and Democratic. Communities which have passed such ordinances are similarly diverse, ranging from ultra-liberal San Francisco and Cambridge to ultra-conservative Dallas and Savannah.

Most of the laws and ordinances that have been passed are quite similar, and instruct local and state law enforcement authorities not to cooperate with federal agents and orders which they consider to be unconstitutional--for example warrantless searches of library borrowing records, or the turning over of undocumented aliens to the INS--a remarkable affront and challenge to federal authority. Some, like Alaska's resolution, go further and instruct the state's congressional delegation to work actively to repeal those sections of the PATRIOT Act which are deemed threats to liberty and the Bill of Rights.

The message is clear. Despite all the efforts by the Bush Administration and its Congressional cheerleaders and PATRIOT Act supporters like Republican Representative Tom Delay and Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman to scare Americans into surrendering their liberties in the name of the so-called War on Terror, the broad public is not convinced, and is more concerned about government threats to liberty than about some terrorist armed with mythical weapons of mass destruction.

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The Bill of Rights Defense Committee, as well as organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and the Friends Committee on National Legislation, have done a good job of spreading the word about resistance to the USA PATRIOT Act. The BRDC in particular has helped by making a model ordinance or resolution available and by offering organizing tips and instructions, based upon experience, for those who wish to have their communities added to this movement of resistance.

Opponents of the PATRIOT Act should also be contacting their congressional representatives, as the issue is now before Congress, to demand an end to the law. The Act (drawn up with no hearings, reportedly by Chertoff, who at the time was Ashcroft's right hand man in charge of terrorist prosecutions), and passed in October, 2001, almost without opposition and no discussion by both houses of congress, came with a time limit, which expires this year. If it is not renewed, its provisions will automatically expire. But the administration is pushing hard for renewal of the measure, and even has plans to come back with measures which would go even further in chipping away traditional civil liberties and legal protections.

The grassroots campaign to oppose the USA PATRIOT Act is a remarkable effort, particularly given the way it has been virtually ignored by the mainstream corporate media. Its primary focus on local organizing, rather than directly on Congress, is also a model for political struggle in an era when there is no effective opposition party in Washington, as is its ability to unite people of diverse and antagonistic political perspectives.