



Talking Points for Concerned Citizens
What your Senator NEEDS TO KNOW about S.1959

- 1. S.1959 is a waste of public funds and creates unnecessary government bureaucracy:** The bill has an estimated budget of \$22 million over 4 years to create an 18 month commission, issue reports, and establish a university-based “Center for Excellence” under the authority of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS already has 8 centers at academic institutions across the country making recommendations to it. DHS does not need to establish another academic research center.
- 2. S.1959 threatens civil liberties and constitutionally protected activities:**
 - The bill’s focus on ideology rather than actual, criminal behavior could result in government intrusion of protected First Amendment activity. This is clearly suggested in comments made by the bill’s author, Rep. Harman: “Our plan must be to intervene before a person crosses that line separating radical views from violent behavior.” It is precisely that line that the First Amendment protects.
 - The definitions of “violent radicalization,” “homegrown terrorism,” and “ideologically-based violence” laid out in the bill are so broad and vague that they could conceivably serve as catalyst and justification behind new, harsher laws and/or prosecutions that would erode civil liberties and constitutional protections.
 - The prominent and specific mention of the internet as a venue for facilitating violent radicalization, homegrown terrorism and ideologically-based violence in S.1959 threatens the First Amendment right to free speech.
 - The bill empowers its commission or “any subcommittee or member” to hold hearings, administer oaths and receive evidence as they see fit. The broad power that this commission gives to itself and its members could result in a new era of McCarthyism or HUAC-like activities, such as the Hollywood “blacklist.” These commissions and congressional activities went far beyond their purposes and destroyed thousands of Americans’ lives. One fervent commission member established by S.1959 could usher in a new dark era of government repression and targeting.
- 3. S.1959 weakens civil liberties**
 - Subparagraph a) of the section on civil liberties excludes undocumented resident aliens from protection. In doing so, this bill actually denies undocumented resident aliens entitlements to equal protection and due process that they are afforded under the Constitution.
 - Subparagraph b) states that “rational basis” is the standard of protection to be extended in the application of this bill. This subparagraph actually serves to weaken constitutional standards of protection in cases of racial or religious discrimination.
- 4. S.1959 is not an effective strategy for securing national security:** homegrown terrorism and radicalization is, as of yet, an undemonstrated pressing problem for national security. That said, the broad language used to define the problem and the research this bill would result in, does not comply with the demonstrated risks. Law enforcement should focus on criminal activity not belief systems.