

**NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD AND SOCIETY OF AMERICAN LAW TEACHERS STRONGLY
OPPOSE HOMEGROWN TERRORISM PREVENTION ACT--November 27, 2007**

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On October 23, 2007, the House of Representatives passed the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007 by a vote of 404-6. The bill will be referred out of committee this week and will then go to the Senate floor. The National Lawyers Guild and the Society of American Law Teachers strongly oppose this legislation because it will likely lead to the criminalization of beliefs, dissent and protest, and invite more draconian surveillance of Internet communications.

This bill would establish a Commission to study and report on "facts and causes" of "violent radicalism" and "extremist belief systems." It defines "violent radicalism" as "adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change." The term "extremist belief system" is not defined; it could refer to liberalism, nationalism, socialism, anarchism, communism, etc.

"Ideologically based violence" is defined in the bill as the "use, planned use, or threatened use of force or violence by a group or individual to promote the group or individual's political, religious, or social beliefs." Thus, "force" and "violence" are used interchangeably. If a group of people blocked the doorway of a corporation that manufactured weapons, or blocked a sidewalk during an anti-war demonstration, it might constitute the use of "force" to promote "political beliefs."

The bill charges that the Internet "has aided in facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process in the United States by providing access to broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda to United States citizens." This provision could be used to conduct more intrusive surveillance of our Internet communications without warrants.

This legislation does not criminalize conduct, but may well lead to criminalizing ideas or beliefs in violation of the First Amendment. By targeting the Internet, it may result in increased surveillance of Internet communications in violation of the Fourth Amendment.

The National Lawyers Guild and the Society of American Law Teachers strongly urge the Senate to refuse to pass the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007.

Founded in 1937 as an alternative to the American Bar Association, which did not admit people of color, the National Lawyers Guild is the oldest and largest public interest/human rights bar organization in the United States. Its headquarters are in New York and it has chapters in every state.

The Society of American Law Teachers (SALT) is a community of progressive law teachers working for justice, diversity, and academic excellence. SALT is the largest membership organization of law faculty and legal education professionals in the United States.