

THE ROAD TO INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES ON THE APPLICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO COMMUNICATIONS SURVEILLANCE



In the wake of revelations about NSA surveillance, several members of the U.S. Congress sprung to action to introduce legislation. Out of more than a dozen bills, four primary proposals have received the most support from members of Congress. The USA FREEDOM Act was recently amended in the House Judiciary Committee, with new provisions added and others modified or removed. Access measured how these five proposals stack up against the International Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance (“the Principles”). The Principles, which have been endorsed by over 400 civil society organizations, provide a framework for assessing how human rights obligations apply when conducting communications surveillance.

The 13 roads below represent the 13 Principles. Each car represents one of the leading NSA reform proposals, on the road toward full compliance with each respective Principle. While no proposal perfectly embodies any Principle, Access judged each proposal on a scale relative to the starting line – where we are today. From there, some cars speed ahead toward the realization of the Principle, while others lag behind, or even drive away from the goal. While some proposals get as far as four mile markers in the right direction, there’s still a stretch of road to go before we cross the finish line.

