Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 2, 2003

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Sensenbrenner,

We are writing to express our appreciation for the work of the Judiciary Committee in overseeing the Department of Justice's conduct in connection with its newfound and expanded powers under the USA Patriot Act. We know that you share the concern of those of us who believe that the war on terrorism can be successfully fought without undermining the constitutional rights and freedoms of the American people.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of Section 215 on patrons of America's libraries and booksellers. To that end, we have sponsored H.R. 1157, the "Freedom to Read Protection Act," which would exempt libraries and booksellers from Section 215. As you may know, this legislation is currently supported, in a bi-partisan manner, by over 100 members of the Congress and by such national organizations as the American Library Association and the American Booksellers Association.

We are aware that pressure by your committee and the public has forced the Department of Justice to be more forthcoming about their activities, including the recent public revelation by Assistant Attorney General Viet Dinh that federal officials had contacted some 50 libraries in the last year under powers granted by the USA Patriot Act.

While we agree that it is extremely important and useful for the Department of Justice to testify before Congress on matters relating to the USA Patriot Act, we also believe that other interested parties should be able to express their views about the impact of Section 215. For instance, while Justice claims only 50 visits to libraries in the last year, a survey by the University of Illinois revealed that over 175 libraries had been approached by federal officials since the September 11th attacks. This suggests that perhaps the Department of Justice is presenting information in a manner designed to obfuscate the true extent of their activities under the USA Patriot Act.

We therefore request that you call hearings on H.R. 1157 at the earliest possible opportunity, and that representatives of other stakeholders be invited to testify, including librarians, booksellers, civil liberties organizations and other groups active around this issue. We believe that there would be widespread public interest in such hearings, and

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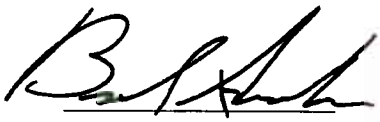
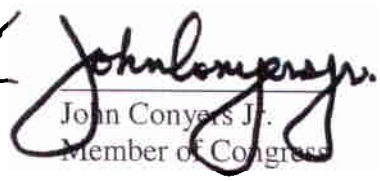
that these alternative sources might provide the Committee a different picture than the official line from Department of Justice.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We stand ready to provide any information you or your staff might require, including suggested witnesses from the various stakeholder groups. In the meantime, we look forward to hearing from you in the near future regarding this request.

Sincerely,

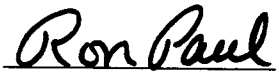


Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress



John Conyers Jr.
Member of Congress

Jeff Flake
Member of Congress



Ron Paul
Member of Congress