June 4, 2002

Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515

Representative John Conyers
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sensenbrenner and Representative Conyers:

We write to you on behalf of a broad range of organizations across the country about the decision of the Attorney General to loosen the guidelines that restrict the surveillance of religious and political organizations in the United States. This decision raises matters of Constitutional authority that require immediate Congressional attention. We do not believe that the Attorney General has the legal authority to pursue domestic spying. We urge you to conduct oversight hearings on the new guidelines.

We are particularly concerned about elements of the guidelines that appear to give the FBI the authority to search through electronic databases without satisfying any legal standard or requiring any judicial review. Such an approach to police authority in the United States is directly contrary to the First and Fourth Amendment and the system of checks and balances established by our form of government.

We are also concerned that the changes authorize unchecked surveillance of lawful religious and political activity, and that such surveillance will be targeted against Arab-Americans, Muslim and immigrants among others.

We urge you to convene a public hearing with the Attorney General so that the following issues may be addressed:

- How will the changes proposed by the Attorney General impact the First Amendment freedoms of political and religious organizations in the United States?

- What is the legal basis for the Attorney General's decision and how does this decision compare with his current authority?

- What means of Congressional oversight will be created to prevent abuse and what means of public reporting will be established to ensure that the public is fully informed about these activities?

- For what period of time does the Attorney General anticipate the FBI will operate with this authority?
We would be pleased to work with you and your staff on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Marc Rotenberg  
Executive Director  
Electronic Privacy Information Center  

Nan Aron  
President  
Alliance for Justice  

Kareem Shora  
Legal Advisor  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  

Laura W. Murphy  
Director Washington Office  
American Civil Liberties Union  

Paula Johnson  
Co-President  
American Law Teachers  

Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director  
American Library Association Washington Office  

Tom DeWeese  
President  
American Policy Center  

Amy Isaacs  
National Director, Americans for Democratic Action  

Majed Jafari  
Director, Government Relations  
Arab American Institute  

Margaret Fung  
Executive Director  
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
David J. Theroux  
Founder and President  
The Independent Institute

Mark Graham  
Institute for Global Communication

Elisa Massimino  
Director, Washington office  
Lawyers Committee for Human Rights

J. Daryl Byler, Director  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office

James Landrith  
Editor & Publisher  
The Multiracial Activist

Julian Bond  
Chairman  
NAACP

Kit Gage  
National Coordinator  
National Coalition to Protect Political Freedom

Susan Grant  
Vice President for Public Policy  
National Consumers League

Heidi Boghosian  
Director  
National Lawyers Guild

Dan Kesselbrenner  
Director  
National Immigration Project  
National Lawyers Guild

Audrie Krause  
Director  
NetAction

Morton H. Halperin  
Director  
Open Society Policy Center
Ralph G. Neas  
President  
People For the American Way  

Deborah Pierce  
Executive Director  
Privacyactivism  

Beth Givens  
Executive Director  
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse  

Manjit Singh  
Executive Director  
Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force (SMART)  

[through June 4, 2002]