

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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Frightening proposition

With its invasive nature and potential for abuse, renewing the Patriot Act unwise



For those Americans willing to relinquish more authority to the U.S. government, exchange individual freedom for security and cast aside all rights to personal privacy, sit back, relax and enjoy the ride, because that's where this country may be heading. The Patriot Act is currently up for renewal.

The Patriot Act essentially strengthens the powers of U.S. intelligence agencies, and it actively does so in many ways, not all of which are bad. For example, the act facilitates information-sharing between intelligence agencies, renders harboring of terrorists and affording them material support a criminal offense and permits nationwide execution of warrants in terrorist cases.

Unfortunately, these positive elements are overshadowed by the act's many glaring sections that, if abused, have the potential to adversely affect U.S. citizens. Such elements, stated by Gerald Lefcourt in *The New York Law Journal*, include: secret searches without direct notification to the individual or delayed notice, the seizure of practically all personal documents, the examination of financial records without a court order, the allowance of authorities to obtain permission from a secret court to listen to individuals' conversations providing information that will never be known to anyone, and enabling access to stored e-mail and other communication records, including stored voice messages.

Now, surely one must think, "What happened to probable cause when executing search warrants?" According to the Department of Justice, the Patriot Act lowered the standard for such intrusions, changing the requirement for executing search warrants in these cases from terrorism being the "sole purpose" to it being only a "significant purpose." So what constitutes a significant purpose to suspect someone of terrorism? That's a good question, and it's a question the Patriot Act doesn't adequately address. It simply provides a lengthy list, containing many gray areas, of what merits the classification of a terrorist act. Discretion is apparently left up to secret courts and intelligence agencies.

But everyone can breathe a sigh



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of relief, as the government would never attempt to use this act for any reason but preventing terrorism, right? Not exactly.

According to *The Washington Times*, the Department of Justice revealed that it obtained 113 secret search authorizations throughout the year following 9-11 compared to the 47 secret searches authorized in the 23 years before the attack. Even more disturbing, *The New York Times* reported that the Department of Justice conducted a study that found the act is regularly being used in non-terrorist related activities.

This information should send up a red flag to the American public. The act is said to specifically focus on terrorist-related activities, yet even the justice department claims the contrary.

If Americans lived under the watchful eye of an ideal government that would never abuse its power, renewing the act would not be problematic. However, history has shown that governments cannot be afforded arbitrary power over citizens or the luxury of operating with impunity.

Renewing the Patriot Act does not necessarily mean that the "Big Brother" society envisioned by Orwell will become a reality, but it's a step in that direction. No one knows how this act will be executed in the future.

Some optimistic Americans may spout off, "If you have nothing to hide, the bill is harmless." Such an outlook is naive and frightening. Today, the government is after terrorists, but tomorrow, who knows. The interpretation and execution of the act is always subject to change.

More importantly, even if the intentions of the act are good, no one can be sure of the people executing the law. Already, the Department of Justice has reported that the act has drifted away from its intended purpose. This will only get more frequent with time. How far will Americans allow the scope of the act to drift before curbing the tide?

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Those who give up liberty for the sake of security deserve neither liberty nor security." Though times are different, the words of this venerated man still apply. Preventing future terrorist attacks should be our government's number one priority, but the 9-11 tragedy should not beguile Americans into issuing the government a blank check with their civil liberties to, theoretically, prevent another attack.

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Bush's job package will boost economy

The economy is bad. With the loss of three million jobs, President George W. Bush has the worst job creation record since Herbert Hoover during the Great Depression. Solutions to this problem have been highly debated amongst Republicans and Democrats alike, but Bush's job retraining program is a solution that will work.



DANIEL ROSSELL

In his State of the Union address, Bush explained how his plan, Jobs for the 21st Century, would work. The program would give approximately \$500 million to the Department of Labor to distribute for education initiatives. Approximately half would go to community colleges to promote the training of highly-skilled workers. The remaining funds would go toward increasing reading and math achievement in high schools. There would also be a \$28 million increase in funding for advanced placement programs.

The program is Bush's attempt to retrain the American workforce for jobs that actually exist. According to the American Council on Education, by putting the money in the

Department of Labor as opposed to the Department of Education, "the signal is to focus on workforce training activities." Many people who have been laid off due to the decline in certain fields need work elsewhere, and Bush is giving them the chance to find it.

Critics of Bush's program may respond that while job training is important, job creation is more critical in helping to alleviate the country's current economic woes. Although Bush's program may not immediately create jobs, it can still help to decrease unemployment. CNN reports that the goal of this program is "on new, technology-based fields hungry for workers."

By retraining workers to better suit them for high-tech fields, Bush's plan helps alleviate unemployment caused by the economic downturn.

Even if it doesn't create jobs, giving new

jobs to unemployed workers still benefits the economy. Furthermore, the technology companies' productivity will increase as well, as they will no longer have to operate with the skilled workers. This will lead to further expansion in the technology industry, which, in the long-run, will lead to more jobs.

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Jobs for the 21st Century also caters specifically to small businesses. Fox News reported that training workers in these critical areas will enable small businesses to "better provide for the needs of their workforce." Bush also wants tax cuts for small businesses, giving them greater capital with which to invest in their business and hire employees.

Helping small businesses is another key to economic productivity. Small Business Survival Committee Chairwoman Kare Kerrigan points out, "Small firms are responsible for the bulk of job creation and innovation in the U.S." Every mas-

sive corporation that employs thousands of workers was once a small business. Small businesses have more room to expand than large corporations, and the expansion process will, of course, require more workers. Therefore, by helping small businesses, Bush's proposal will create jobs in the long-run.

At a time when U.S. citizens are losing jobs to foreign workers, a program is needed to maintain the skill of American workers and prepare the economy for the next generation of workers. Robert Holleyman, president of the Business Software Alliance said, "Support for these types of investments will be critical in maintaining the long term competition of America."

The economy is a heated topic this election season. Both Republicans and Democrats are trying to convince the American public that they have the magical solution. While Bush's solution is by no means perfect, it is a step in the right direction.

Daniel Rossell is a junior nuclear engineering major.

MAIL CALL

Rich being overtaxed

In Response to a Feb. 3 mail call:

Thanks for making mail call look more like the Communist Manifesto, Mr. Kocurek. It's all about "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" with you. No wonder you don't see the big picture. What is happening in Vermont is what is happening all over the country. A small percentage of the population is being forced to pay the taxes while the majority lives off of it. This way, the politicians who promise that they can squeeze money out of the evil rich can always count on a majority of votes.

Knowing that the top 50 percent of wage earners pay 96.03 percent of the income taxes, I would love to see John's idea of a fair tax rate to be imposed on the "rich." No one is saying the rich shouldn't be taxed, but why should they be punished for their success?

You see, John, we have this little thing called the Constitution. If the government would stay out of places it has no business being, like social security, welfare, zoning laws, etc. and focus on the things it has been enumerated to have control over, we would all pay a lot less taxes on junk and could spend more money on what is really important: police, defense, roads, etc.

At that point, the enterprising among us can better enjoy the fruits of their success while the rest get by as best they can through their own labors, as it should be.

Paul Sims
Class of 2006

Federal solution needed

In response to Lindsay Orman's Feb. 3 column:

Lindsay Orman's column about the same-sex marriage amendment com-

pletely misses the fundamental point on this issue.

She asserted that definitions of and legislation about marriage are best dealt with on a state-by-state basis so as to reflect the will of the people on a regional basis.

However, legal scholars have pointed out that if a liberal state like Massachusetts chooses to recognize gay marriages, gay couples will flock to that state solely to get married, return to their home states, and proceed to challenge their state laws as being inconsistent on federal constitutional grounds with the "Full Faith and Credit" clause.

Article IV, Section 1, of our Constitution states: "Full faith and credit shall be given in each state to the public acts, records and judicial proceedings of every other state ..."

The idea that homosexual marriage might be contained to a few liberal states like Massachusetts is com-

pletely untenable because of this "marriage anywhere, marriage everywhere" principle. A federal amendment for the defense of marriage is the approach supported by most conservatives because the state-by-state approach Orman advocates is noth-

ing more than a Maginot line that gay marriage advocates will simply do an end-run around.

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