

Dear Friend,

I wanted to alert you to an appalling abuse of power that occurred yesterday on the House floor. Republican leaders once again thumbed their nose at the concept of fairness and overturned the clear bipartisan majority in the House.

Yesterday, the House was poised to take responsible steps to preserve our civil liberties, protect political expression, and prevent the misuse of the Patriot Act. When passed, we were promised strong congressional oversight of the Patriot Act to prevent its implementation from being overly intrusive. Unfortunately, that oversight has not occurred, and a particular provision in the act that permits searches of library records clearly fits the definition of overly intrusive.

As you may have seen in press reports, in a shameful disregard for majority rule, the Republican leadership held open a vote on the amendment that would have protected your civil liberties over twice as long as normal to twist the arms of many Members of Congress. The initial vote was 219 to 201 for an amendment I co-sponsored. However, after severe pressure, the final vote was 210 to 210, a tie that meant the amendment's defeat.

This bipartisan, common-sense amendment offered by my colleagues Bernie Sanders (Vermont – Independent) and Butch Otter (Idaho – Republican) would have prevented law enforcement agencies from conducting broad and indiscriminate searches of libraries and bookstores and peering into your personal reading choices. We all agree that we need to take the necessary steps to protect and defend the American people against terrorism. However, we must not do so at the cost of shredding our precious Constitution and the civil liberties we cherish.

For more information on this terrible spectacle, please click [here](#).

Very truly yours,

Tom Udall