

Thank you to The Rothmere American Institute.

You are each students who study American government and politics. As someone who is on the inside of both, will you please let me know if you get it figured out? I know I sure haven't.

You may have heard but the U.S. Congress is not very popular back home. You see, I have to go overseas to get a decent reception. I even get grief from my own family. My dad is a big, tough former Air Force Sergeant. He is fond of saying:

"You know I have five boys. Four turned out really good and I have one in Congress."

I want to talk to you today about how the House Intelligence Committee functions and my role as Chairman. Our job is to make sure that our intelligence agencies have the tools, resources, and authorities they need to carry out their important mission, and that we never stop working to improve the Intelligence Community's effectiveness.

My Democrat partner, Dutch Ruppersberger from Maryland, and I worked to restore a critical function of the committee - passing meaningful annual intelligence authorization bills. We have completed four in four years and are working hard together to bring our fifth and final one across the finish line by the end of the year.

After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, Congress created a commission to examine the attacks and what should be done to prevent future attacks. One recommendation from the 9/11 Commission was to have Congressional authorization and appropriation committees work together more closely on intelligence matters. We got that done by changing committee rules to allow Members of the appropriations committee to participate in our hearings and briefings. This change helped eliminate the daylight that existed between our intelligence and appropriation bills in the past.

The Congressional intelligence oversight committees are also the connection between the arcane business of intelligence and the American people. Through strong and effective oversight, we seek to assure the American people that the intelligence community is doing all it can to keep us safe, while in a manner consistent with American laws and values.

As technology changes, we need to ensure our laws and regulations keep pace. For example, right now, when a terrorist or other legitimate foreign intelligence targets bring a cell phone into the United States, NSA has to stop collecting information on that phone. Many of the compliance violations broadly reported in the media occurred because NSA didn't immediately realize a target's phone had entered U.S. territory.

I've got another example. In an effort to protect our economy and our way of life, HPSCI proposed legislation that allows the government and private sector to share cyber security threat information. This would break down barriers to information sharing that were enacted

into law decades before the Internet age. We are working hard to get that legislation to the President's desk this year as well.

The large investment in intelligence after 9-11 was absolutely necessary. Every day the nation benefits from this commitment. However, any area of government spending that increases as rapidly as intelligence did in response to a national emergency will be accompanied by some excess, waste, and inefficiency.

When I assumed Chairmanship in 2011, we were still seeing troubling remnants of this excess and inefficiency, and we moved to eliminate it.

At the same time, my guidance to the Committee was that, while we should make every effort to weed out unnecessary spending, we would not make any compromises that would jeopardize mission. And I don't believe we have.

Of course, there is also another player in the oversight of intelligence and that would be the United States Senate. I am fortunate to have a very strong relationship with the Democrat Senate Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein and the Republican Vice Chairman Saxby Chambliss. Like most anything else in life, the key to success in partnering with the Senate is productive relationships. We all strive to take the petty partisanship you sometimes see in American politics out of the equation. We all share the belief that national security should be bipartisan or even nonpartisan. It is too important for games or posturing. We try to find common ground with the Administration as well though we aren't shy to point out our differences in a constructive way.

Many in the U.S. and around the world think that Congress is merely a rubber stamp for the intelligence agencies and that we provide token oversight. That simply is not the case. We couldn't talk much about the programs that ended up in the newspaper because they were classified. But that doesn't mean we weren't exercising oversight behind closed doors.

And we have extensive engagement with the intelligence agencies themselves. For example, our members and staff held more than 130 oversight meetings with the National Security Agency last year and have had more than 100 so far this year. If you notice, after the leaks from a former NSA contractor, the biggest supporters of the programs were those who knew it best.

Intelligence oversight is challenging. If you do it right, you are squirreled away in a windowless room three floors underneath the U.S. Capitol for hours on end. It's not sexy, and before the last couple of years, it wasn't discussed much in the media. Now there is a lot of interest in what we do, sometimes for the wrong reasons.

There is a lot of talk these days about privacy versus security. I reject the notion of "balancing" privacy and security. Privacy is not at odds with security; without security, there is no real privacy.

The concept of security as a necessary guarantee of individual rights is not a new one. John Locke theorized that men form governments in order to safeguard their lives, liberty, and property in a dangerous world. And in our digitally connected world, privacy is an empty letter without security.

Today, even mundane actions create vast amounts of digital exhaust – just think about the electronic activity you did on your way to AEI this morning. Did you set your alarm on your phone to wake up? Did you call Uber or a taxi through an on-line application? Did you plot the best way to get here on Google maps? Did you pay for your coffee at Starbucks with a credit card or a mobile app? How many emails and text messages have you already sent this morning? What data was mined from the content of those communications by both the sending and receiving applications? How many different mobile apps have used GPS to determine your exact location every step of the way? It's only 9 a.m. and already you've interacted with the Internet scores of times.

Without security, your ability to keep all of those digital bread crumbs from being public is meaningless. Malware could be lurking in your applications and services, sending all of your personal data to third parties. Without secure networks, Russian crime organizations can steal your financial data or Chinese hackers can steal your identity.

Some of you in the room may be of interest to the Chinese, Russians, or Iranian governments, and their intelligence services are trying to collect your pattern of life to enable their next spear-phishing campaign against you or your co-workers.

Your ability to earn a living by engaging in free enterprise in the modern world relies on a secure Internet. Without a secure Internet, you can't start a business, obtain a loan, or make an investment online.

Only with these considerations in mind can we begin to determine what constitutes a reasonable expectation of privacy in the Internet age.

Some offer expansive, self-serving, and impractically vague definitions of privacy without any consequence or cost. They downplay the many, very real threats we face today and ignore the need for us to defend ourselves. Even if we did not live in such a dangerous world, our need for digital connectivity in nearly every aspect of our economy and our personal lives precludes an absolute level of privacy. I want to thank you so much for taking the time to study American government and politics. As someone who travels around the world to lots of tough neighborhoods, I can't begin to tell you how important the U.S./U.K. relationship is. Our partnership does amazing things around the world from keeping our people safe from terrorism, to helping others in need as a result of national disasters or disease. Our priorities and approach are almost always aligned. Certainly in the world of intelligence, our services work very closely to keep our citizens safe. I hope we can continue this invaluable partnership for generations to come. The world has been better off because of it. As Winston Churchill

said: “where we are able to stand together and work together for righteous causes, we shall always be thankful, and the world will always be free.”

I’ll close with one final story. I have the privilege of traveling the world on behalf of the United States government. At one stop I was meeting with a senior Intelligence official from a Middle Eastern Nation. He was a Christian in a nation that governs with a power sharing arrangement with Christians and Muslims. As we were finishing the meeting he grabbed my arm and said: “Congressman, please tell the people of the United States and Europe to not give up on themselves. After all, who would care about a small nation like ours? Who would fight for a Christian like me? The Chinese? The Russians?”

About two months later that individual was killed by a suicide bomber.

You see, the stakes are so high in the world, and the partnership between our two countries is so important. Thank you again for having me here today. I look forward to taking some of your questions.