

Ruling protects Congress from FBI

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- An appellate court decision is likely to make investigations into members of the U.S. Congress more difficult, The Washington Post reports. The court ruled in a challenge to the 2005 search of U.S. Rep. William Jefferson's office. The Louisiana Democrat is now under indictment. The Justice Department asked for an emergency stay of the decision this week, the Post said. In court papers, the department said that the decision includes an "unprecedented expansion" of limits designed to protect legislators from intimidation. The decision could limit the FBI's ability to use techniques like searches, questioning staffers or electronic surveillance as long as a lawmaker can claim that the information investigators seek involves legislation. "It's going to take the government a long time to figure out what it can and can't do," said Peter Zeidenberg, a former Justice Department lawyer now in private practice. "The government is going to have to reassess how it investigates members of Congress. This is just going to make life extremely difficult."

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