

Senate passes FISA reauthorization

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Senate Tuesday approved on a 68-to-29 vote a bill that would overhaul how the government monitors foreign terrorist suspects. The bill would reauthorize and modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, making several changes to wiretapping rules and monitoring of foreign terrorist suspects, C-SPAN reported. It also would grant legal immunity to telecommunications companies that provided information to federal investigators without a warrant, a sticking point between Senate Democrats and Republicans, and between the two chambers. The House passed a bill without the immunity language, The Hill said. If the House doesn't accept the Senate bill, the differences would be reconciled in conference. "It's really a sad day when the United States Senate provides immunity beyond the law to these companies," said Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., who authored or co-sponsored several of the defeated amendments. Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, acknowledged the disagreements regarding immunity. "But what we do is not so much of the moment but for the longer term," he said. "There may be disagreements on immunity but there can be no disagreements" on national security. The Protect America Act, a temporary intelligence-gathering measure, is scheduled to expire Saturday.

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