Since the passage of the original Bill of Rights, Congress has passed additional laws involving the rights of citizens. One of these, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, outlines procedures for requesting judicial authorization for physical and electronic surveillance of persons involved in espionage or terrorism against the United States by foreign powers. Originally approved in 1978, the act has undergone several revisions that have at times either expanded or limited the government’s power to conduct surveillance on its citizens.

When passing these laws, members of Congress must consider a very important question: To what extent, for the sake of national security, should or can individual rights be restricted? In this activity it is your turn to consider what personal liberties, if any, you would be willing to sacrifice in order to maintain national security.

Your team will be assigned one of the scenarios below to consider, and as a team you will decide whether the situation you were assigned would be permissible. Before coming to a decision, you will need to discuss with your team members reasons why the restriction of individual rights should be allowed and why it should not be allowed. After your team comes to a conclusion, you will be asked to present your decision and reasoning to your classmates.

- The government places you on its “watch list” and keeps you under surveillance for a week.
- Your personal or business e-mails are collected and filtered for three days to identify your friends and acquaintances as possible collaborators or terrorists.
- Your phone is tapped for several months, and the information is used to see if your family members are engaged in illegal activities.
- You are required to carry a national identification card that includes personal information such as your address and phone, your medical information, and global positioning system information that provides your current location.
- An imaging satellite monitors your house or business periodically over the course of a year to look for unusual levels of vehicle traffic and truck shipments that may contain illegal weaponry.