

TV ad on Legislation Untruthful

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No doubt many of you have seen the barrage of paid political ads or received phone calls from Washington asking me to support the Senate bill on foreign intelligence surveillance.

The ads claim that the House of Representatives' unwillingness to pass the Senate bill has made America more vulnerable to terrorist attacks. The ads are misleading and could not be further from the truth.

The bill that expired Feb. 15 allowed the Bush administration to conduct "warrantless" surveillance on American citizens. This is expressly prohibited by the Fourth Amendment and I voted against it. The current law provides for immediate surveillance and, after 72 hours, requires a warrant to continue.

Our ability to detect terrorists and protect our citizens has not been diminished and stating otherwise only emboldens our enemies and makes America less safe.

Why the ads and why is the president so anxious to pass the Senate bill? The answer is the Bush administration's legal liability: After 9/11, the administration asked telephone companies to provide American citizens' private phone call records, which may be illegal. The administration insists on "retroactive immunity" for the telecommunication companies as it could prevent these firms from testifying against the administration.

The group running the ads, Defense of Democracies, is a spinoff of what was once a legitimate organization comprised of both Democrats and Republicans. Their Democratic board members were unaware of this activity and resigned, publicly denouncing the organization's false and misleading statements.

The Bush administration, Defense of Democracies and the partisan zealots who are anonymously funding this effort represent what is wrong with Washington and why the nation is in desperate need of political change.

As for me, I am proud to stand up for the Constitution and I believe that nobody, even the president, is above the law.

Tim Mahoney

House of Representatives

16th District

Palm Beach Gardens