

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2006

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

We write to register our strong objection to the President's "signing statement" issued with the USA Patriot Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005, which claimed the authority to ignore reporting requirements to Congress. We ask that the Administration immediately rescind this statement and abide by the law.

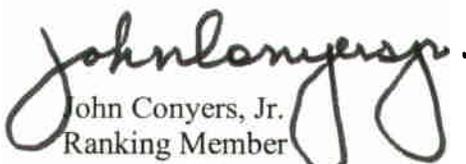
As you know, "signing statements" do not have the force of law. Legislation passed by both Houses and signed by the President does. As Article 1, Section 7, of the Constitution states: "Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it." If the President does not like part of a bill, he has only one option: to veto the entire thing.

This signing statement, and many of the 107 similar statements the President has issued on other legislation, have the effect of corrupting the legislative process. Indeed, during consideration of this matter, many Members who supported the final law did so based upon the guarantee of additional reporting and oversight. This Administration cannot, after the fact, unilaterally repeal provisions of the law implementing such oversight.

This troubling pattern is evident in other important legislation. For example, after the President signed into law Senator John McCain's legislation to prohibit the cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees, a bill the President claimed to support in its final form, he asserted his right to interpret the bill "consistent with" his authority as Commander-in-Chief – in effect, to ignore the law if he deems necessary.

It is our considered view that the time to raise objections to laws Congress is while they are pending. Once the President signs a bill, he and all of us are bound by it. We respectfully urge that you so advise the President and declare his signing statement to have no force or effect.

Sincerely,


John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee


Jane Harman
Ranking Member
House Intelligence Committee