

CONGRESS

House leaders agree to vote on amendment restricting surveillance of internet browsing

A similar proposal fell just short of being adopted by the Senate.



Rep. Zoe Lofgren will offer up the language of the amendment with Rep. Warren Davidson. | Susan Walsh/AP Photo

By **KYLE CHENEY**

05/22/2020 04:49 PM EDT



House leaders have struck a deal to consider an amendment to legislation reauthorizing controversial domestic surveillance programs, in a bid to incorporate new restrictions on the ability of the government to monitor Americans' internet browsing histories without a warrant.

The language of the amendment, which will be offered by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) and Rep. Warren Davidson (R-Ohio), is still being finalized, according to a Democratic aide familiar with the process.

But the agreement for the House to take it up followed weeks of internal discussions between Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office, the House Judiciary and Intelligence committees and progressive lawmakers who have been seeking more sweeping reforms of federal surveillance laws. Trump allies in Congress have also been amenable to more aggressive reforms, citing allegations by President Donald Trump that the FBI improperly monitored figures in his campaign amid an investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The Lofgren measure is expected to closely mirror one that narrowly failed in the Senate offered by Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Steve Daines (R-Mont.). Their proposal would require government officials to obtain a court-approved warrant before accessing Americans' web browsing histories — or, in an urgent situation, to obtain these histories and retroactively get them approved by a judge.

"This isn't even a partisan proposition," Wyden said last week. "Any administration could be tempted to collect the web browsing and internet search history of political enemies — politicians, activists, journalists."

The amendment [failed](#) 59-37, one vote shy of the 60-vote threshold required for approval on a day when senators who may have pushed it over the top were absent.

The Senate subsequently [passed on an 80-16 vote](#) the broader reauthorization of three components of federal surveillance law known as the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and sent it back to the House for consideration.

The legislation includes a handful of new privacy protections that were blessed by Attorney General William Barr, who helped negotiate the version of the bill approved in the Senate. The measure created an unusual alliance of House progressives skeptical of government surveillance and Republicans aligned with Trump's allegations that FISA provisions were abused to spy on former campaign adviser Carter Page late in the 2016 election.

The timing of the House's consideration of the Lofgren amendment is still being worked out, according to the Democratic aide, but it is likely to be adopted after being shaped by Pelosi's office and key Democratic lawmakers.

Lofgren and Davidson advocated for their amendment in a letter Wednesday to the House Rules Committee, noting that the Wyden-Daines proposal had a bipartisan majority of the Senate and that at least two senators indicated they would have voted for it had they been present.

"Our internet activity opens a window into the most sensitive areas of our private life," they added. "Without this prohibition, intelligence officials would potentially have access to information such as our personal health, religious practices, and political views."

The House is expected to pass the surveillance measure next week.

Martin Matishak contributed to this report.

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