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Contact: Jamal Ware
(202) 225-4121

Hoekstra Statement on Court Ruling on Protect America Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. *U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, today issued the following statement after the committee was informed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review intends to release an unclassified version of an opinion upholding the Constitutionality of the Protect America Act (PAA), governing certain terrorist surveillance of foreign targets in foreign countries.*

“The Committee has been continuously briefed on this matter as it has proceeded. This is the latest in a series of opinions—some public, some classified—that have upheld America’s terrorist surveillance laws. Despite the demagoguery of some commentators and interest groups, it is reassuring that federal judges in the appropriate court have again agreed with our assessment of the complex legal issues. This only reinforces the significant, bipartisan political consensus among those who are fully briefed on the issues.

“Unfortunately, the Protect America Act, and terrorist surveillance in general, has been the subject of wild and often uninformed speculation. Yet courts have repeatedly upheld key authorizations. The court’s well-reasoned and sound opinion on the PAA is only the latest in a series and clearly demonstrates that once again those who know the facts find our intelligence programs to be lawful and fully consistent with the Constitution.

“Terrorist surveillance authorities, the PAA and attempts by Republicans to modernize the FISA law have always been about strengthening America’s ability to spy on foreign targets in foreign lands. Spying on terrorist’s communications overseas is a vital capability—one that most Americans support—and it has helped keep our nation safe from attack.

“That is why congressional leaders, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, did not object to the original terrorist surveillance program. It is also why congressional Republicans have fought so hard to give America’s intelligence agencies the tools and authorities needed to stay ahead of terrorist and foreign enemies. We will continue to do so and look forward to working

with President-elect Obama, who clearly understands that many of these issues are not as simple or easy as some wish.”