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Reyes Emphasizes Need for 30-day Extension of PAA

Washington, D.C. – *Following the Bush Administration's consent yesterday granting the House Intelligence Committee access to documents relating to the Administration's warrantless wiretapping program, Chairman Silvestre Reyes, D-TX, of the House Intelligence Committee released the following statement urging passage of H.R. 5104, which Reyes introduced in the U.S. House with Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI):*

“Last May, Ranking Member Hoekstra and I sent a written request to the Administration for documents related to the President's warrantless surveillance program. Our request was grounded in the belief that it was essential for Congress to have access to all relevant documents as we deliberated changes to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), including the retroactive immunity provisions sought by the White House.

“Yesterday, nearly eight months later, the White House finally agreed and granted the House Intelligence Committee limited access to Presidential Authorizations, the underlying Justice Department legal opinions, and government communications with the telecommunications companies.

“Thousands of pages of material were provided, and it will take some time to carefully review these detailed documents and to make a reasoned judgment on what they contain.

“In order to ensure that the House has sufficient time to review these documents and to engage the Senate in a meaningful conference on FISA reform legislation, Judiciary Committee Chairman Conyers and I have introduced a short-term 30 day extension of the Protect America Act, which I hope the President will support. The American people deserve nothing less than our careful consideration of changes to surveillance law that implicates our cherished civil liberties and privacy rights.”