



KEEP AMERICA
SAFE AND FREE

THE ACLU CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION

ACLU Mobilizes Members and Supporters Nationwide To Keep America “Safe and Free”

First National Television Advertisement Highlights
Attorney General Ashcroft’s Attacks on Civil Liberties

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON– The American Civil Liberties Union today announced a \$3.5 million national campaign that includes for the first time paid television advertising and a massive mobilization of its members and supporters in a new nationwide effort to safeguard the freedoms that Attorney General Ashcroft and the Bush Administration have targeted since last year’s terrorist attacks.

“Those who ask the American people to choose whether they want to be ‘safe or free’ are presenting a false and dangerous choice,” said Anthony D. Romero, ACLU Executive Director. “The real difficult task ahead is to create a new and more powerful balance between two fundamental values – liberty and security. In this way America can be both safe and free.”

The campaign, launched nearly one year to the day after Congress hastily passed the USA PATRIOT Act in response to Sept. 11, represents an unprecedented level of engagement of the ACLU’s resources, leadership and grassroots supporters in the organization’s 80-year history, Romero said.

To kick off the campaign, the ACLU today began airing a 30-second television spot the group’s first national television advertisement that graphically illustrates how essential freedoms have been curtailed in the name of security since Sept. 11.

“Look what John Ashcroft is doing to our Constitution,” a voiceover says as the screen shows a pair of hands editing and cutting out portions of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. “He’s seized powers for the Bush Administration no president should ever have. The right to investigate you for what you say, to intrude on your privacy, to hold you in jail without charging

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you with a crime.”

Laura W. Murphy, Director of the ACLU’s Washington Legislative Office, said the advertisement is meant to galvanize members and supporters. “There are a growing number of people in America who are frightened and angry about the government’s anti-civil liberties response to the terrorist attacks – and they are ready to act,” she said.

“We are going to organize them, expand their numbers and put politicians in Washington on notice that the American people want the checks and balances of democracy, not the edicts and decrees of kings.”

The ACLU’s specific policy goals include:

- Putting an end to government spying on political and religious activities.
- Repealing anti-civil liberties provisions in the USA PATRIOT Act.
- Protecting privacy by limiting surveillance, data collection and information sharing.

Starting today, the ACLU and its 50 state affiliates will begin working toward the passage of local and state ordinances prohibiting local law enforcement participation in repressive Administration initiatives such as the Justice Department’s plan to deputize local and state police to enforce immigration laws.

The ACLU hopes to contribute to the passage of dozens of such resolutions in the next several months and will add staff to its national legislative office for that purpose. Nine communities have passed local initiatives already including Cambridge and Northampton, MA; Sante Fe, NM; Ann Arbor, MI and Carrboro, NC, and organizing efforts have started in 30 municipalities around the country.

In addition to grassroots organizing and legislative lobbying, the ACLU will continue to monitor implementation of the USA PATRIOT Act. The ACLU has already filed two dozen lawsuits challenging government secrecy, detention of immigrants and U.S. citizens, discrimination against Arab Americans and violations of the free speech rights of protesters.

In the first non-governmental brief to be filed before a secret appeals court, the ACLU recently urged three federal judges to reject the Justice Department’s radical bid for broadly expanded powers to spy on U.S. citizens. The Senate Judiciary Committee, which has oversight of the Justice Department, also condemned the government’s latest power grab, saying, “the abuses of the past are far too fresh simply to surrender to the executive branch unfettered discretion to determine the scope of these changes.”

“We take heart from the efforts of key members of Congress who are actively attempting to monitor how the Department of Justice uses its broad new powers,” said Murphy, “and we will do everything in our power to ensure that future efforts to restrict our liberty will be examined

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and debated in public, unlike the USA PATRIOT Act.”

The ACLU advertisement the first in a series will run nationally on cable channels in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Seattle and Washington, DC, and on a limited basis during the Sunday morning news talk shows on the ABC, CBS and NBC networks in Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, DC, San Francisco and Seattle.

For more information on the ACLU campaign, go to <http://www.aclu.org>