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CONTACT: Kevin Lawlor, 202/225-1880

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Rep. Ellen Tauscher
Backs Bipartisan FISA Legislation

Washington, DC -Today, the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendments Act of 2008. The legislation modernizes the original FISA law enacted in 1978 and replaces the controversial Protect America Act. It increases our nation's security by ensuring there is no gap in intelligence collection against terrorists, while protecting our civil liberties by preventing the government from conducting surveillance on U.S. citizens without a lawful warrant. This bipartisan compromise also increases oversight of intelligence activities, rejects automatic immunity for telecommunications companies, and contains a 2012 sunset so that Congress can make any necessary further improvements under the next Administration. It passed the House this afternoon by a vote of 293 to 129.

Rep. Ellen Tauscher
released the following statement:

"Our goal should be to capture and prosecute every terrorist who poses a threat to our national security while holding tight to the privacy rights we cherish as Americans. This bill strikes the right balance. It improves and updates the original FISA legislation from the 1970s while bolstering protections for Americans' civil liberties at home and abroad - a dramatically different and better approach than the Bush Administration's original proposal. It will give our intelligence agencies the tools they need to do their jobs, while protecting Americans' Constitutional rights through real judicial oversight and rejecting the President's request for blanket immunity for telecommunications companies.

"Moreover, Congress today ensured no future President can again go outside the law. This bill guarantees that the President's illegal warrantless surveillance program is fully investigated and that safeguards exit to prevent any such future secret program.

"Balancing security and privacy rights is essential to our American values and way of life, and I believe this bill finds common ground that enhances both."