

Hello, J. Edgar, We're Still Here.

The Old Country Lawyer is indeed Old enough to remember the last war in which the United States was involved that dragged on pointlessly for year after year killing off folks from this country and others. In those days telephones were connected by wires, which led to the term "wiretapping", describing the practice of unannounced listening to telephone conversations. During that war, most of us folks who were critical of any of the Government's positions, generally assumed that telephone conversations were not secure. We tried not to say anything over the phone for which we might be prosecuted, harassed, or disappeared. If any unexpected sound was heard in the course of a telephone conversation, both parties generally responded with, "Hello, J. Edgar?"

On August 4, 2007, the House of Representatives passed Senate Bill 1927, the "Protect America Act of 2007", by a vote of 227 to 183, two Republicans voting "nay" and forty-one Democrats voting "yea". This legislation generally extends for another six months the authority to wiretap by the President's appointees without the inconvenience of prior approval by a court. Five of the seven Ohio Democrats voted against this bill, Representatives Tim Ryan, Betty Sutton, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Dennis Kucinich, and Marcy Kaptur. Rep. Steve LaTourette voted in favor. The Senate had passed the bill the previous day by a vote of 60 to 28, Senator Brown voting against and Senator Voinovich in favor. Americans in future generations will thank Senator Brown and Representatives Ryan, Sutton, Jones, Kucinich, and Kaptur for defending the hypothetical freedom from unreasonable search, at least until the wiretappers hear them and arrest them.