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Senate Panel, 12-0, Votes Unit to Scan Intelligence Actions

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 24 (AP) —The Senate Government Operations Committee voted 12 to 0 today to create a panel to monitor intelligence operations. It included procedures that could result in the expulsion of a Senator who leaked secrets.

The resolution, which would not be legally binding, now goes to the Rules Committee before reaching the full Senate, probably near the end of next month.

In addition to sanctions against Senators and staff members who leaked secrets, the resolution gave the Senate power to disclose intelligence information over the objections of the President. It also called for, but did not require, the White House to consult with Congress before undertaking a secret operation overseas.

The measure would create an 11-member committee composed of six Democrats and five Republicans who could serve as intelligence overseers for a maximum of six years.

Earlier, the panel adopted a provision that would allow five members of the proposed supervisory committee or 16 members of the full Senate to demand that the Ethics Committee investigate any alleged leak. Depending on its findings, the ethics panel could recommend that a Senator be censured, removed from the supervisory committee or expelled from office. Staff members who leaked information would be dismissed.

Members of the Government Operations Committee noted that the fact that the measure was a resolution and not a bill would create conflicts with legislation already on the books.

For instance, the resolution does nothing to change the Hughes-Ryan amendment under which the White House is required to brief six standing committees on covert operations. Unless separate legislation is passed to alter that amendment, the new resolution would increase, rather than decrease, the number of Congressional committees with access to intelligence secrets.

Senate aides explained that the measure had been changed from a bill to a resolution because of fears that the House, now embroiled in a controversy over leaks, would be unable to enact monitoring legislation this year. The resolution would become effective as soon as it was approved by the Senate.