

House Group Approves Tough Privacy Guarantees

Washington

A House judiciary subcommittee unanimously approved a bill yesterday that would put new restrictions on federal inspection of citizens' bank, credit or telephone records, mail and telegrams, and on monitoring of phone calls.

The measure, passed on a 5 to 0 vote, would require that a customer be notified of a request from any federal agency to look at bank, credit or telephone records. The customer could refuse access and the records could be obtained then only under a court-approved subpoena or search warrant.

The practice of "mail covers" — where the Postal Service records the name and address of the sender, the place and date of the postmark, class of mail and other data on the outside of any class of mail — would be restricted to felony investigations, and then only after the affected patron was notified.

Additionally, "strict criteria" would be set under which a telephone company could monitor conversations, according to representative Robert Kastenmeier (Dem-Wis.), the subcommittee chairman.

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