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OPINION

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Senator Paul Reintroduces Bill to Stop Warrantless Spying on Americans

Dr. Rand Paul reintroduced the Fourth Amendment Restoration and Protection Act. The bill would ensure Americans cannot be subjected to government surveillance upon the order of the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court and prohibit warrantless searches of Americans' communications. While national security requires the ability to gather intelligence on foreign threats, using those authorities to conduct warrantless spying on Americans is an impermissible violation of the rights guaranteed to us by the Fourth Amendment.

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) was created decades ago to prevent government spying abuses against Americans. But recent evidence shows it has not worked as

intended.

In 2019, the Justice Department's own watchdog found major problems with how the FBI got permission from the secretive FISA Court to wiretap Carter Page, a former Trump campaign advisor. One major newspaper described the process as "staggeringly dysfunctional and error-ridden." A follow-up review of 29 similar cases found an average of 20 mistakes in each application made to the FISA Court to conduct surveillance. In four of those applications, officials could not even locate the required paperwork that should have backed up the facts.

The FISA Court itself said the government committed "widespread violations" of the rules governing searches. A declassified FISA Court opinion from 2022

revealed that the FBI ran about 278,000 improper searches of Americans. Since then, the government has conducted more than 70,000 warrantless searches of Americans' phone calls, text messages, and emails.

Senator Paul's bill addresses these issues while still allowing the government to monitor foreign threats and terrorists. The bill would:

- Maintain the authority of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to order surveillance of foreigners and terrorists.
- Preserve judicially recognized exceptions to the requirements of the Fourth Amendment, including when an emergency renders obtaining a warrant impractical.
- Require the

government to seek a warrant for surveillance of U.S. persons from an Article III court.

Prohibit the government from conducting information queries of a U.S. person pursuant to section 702 of FISA or Executive Order 12333.

Prevent the government from introducing in evidence any information concerning a U.S. person acquired or derived from an acquisition under FISA or Executive Order 12333.

"No secret court should be allowed to authorize spying on American citizens," said Dr. Paul. "My Fourth Amendment Restoration and Protection Act would exempt Americans from the FISA process and ensure both constitutional rights and national security are protected."

WoodmenLife Launches Community Champions Contest

Offering \$10,000 to Fund Local Nonprofit Organizations

WoodmenLife, a champion of family, community and country since 1890, is offering donations totaling \$10,000 to fund worthwhile community nonprofit organizations across the country.

The Community Champions contest is seeking nominations for deserving U.S.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in good standing. One Grand Prize winner will be selected to receive a \$6,000 donation from WoodmenLife. Four finalists will each receive \$1,000 donations.

The public is urged to nominate community champions via the online submission portal, which can be found through WoodmenLife's Facebook and Instagram profiles between Monday, July 13, and Wednesday, July 22. WoodmenLife encourages advocates to include photos or videos to highlight how their proposed nonprofit organization has impacted their community and why the organization deserves the donation.

WoodmenLife will hold a public vote for nominees between July 29 and August 12 and select the Grand Prize winner and four finalists, whose names will be announced Saturday, August 29. Complete contest rules are available online.

"There are millions of community champions hard at work improving the lives of their neighbors and building stronger cities and towns across the country. WoodmenLife's Community Champions initiative is our way of enabling these champions to maximize their efforts," said WoodmenLife Executive Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer Kyle McMahan. "WoodmenLife chapters and members actively support their communities year-round, participating in more than 2,700 events and donating more than 123,000 hours toward community improvement projects annually."

State Real Property Tax Rate Drops for 6th Consecutive Year

Rate decreases to 10.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value

Monday, Governor Andy Beshear announced the commonwealth's real property tax rate has dropped for the sixth consecutive year, decreasing to 10.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value in 2026.

Kentucky law requires the Kentucky Department of Revenue to set the real property rate no later than July 1 of each year.

"Prices are too high right now, and every dollar counts. I'm focused on helping our families save," Beshear said. "We've lowered

income taxes and the property tax rate, temporarily lowered gas and diesel prices and provided tax relief through the homestead exemption. Folks shouldn't be struggling to get by — they should be able to get ahead and live out the American Dream."

His office reports that this joins other steps that Beshear has taken to help Kentuckians save, including:

- Signing legislation in 2023 and 2025 to lower income taxes.

Following a spike in gas prices due to the conflict in Iran, signing an executive order in May reducing Kentucky's gas tax by 10 cents per-gallon, saving Kentuckians an estimated \$26.8 million combined over a one-month period. The Governor extended the order an extra month in 33 communities where local officials requested an extension and also activated the state's price-gouging statute at the time to ensure the relief went directly to Kentucky families.

Amid soaring gas prices earlier this year, signing an emergency regulation to freeze the gas tax at 26.4 cents per-gallon ahead of an expected increase to 27 cents per gallon on July 1, saving Kentuckians about \$1.7 million combined each month.

Announcing the expanded homestead tax exemption to provide tax relief and help seniors and other vulnerable Kentuckians stay in their homes.

Signing an executive order to freeze the 2026 motor vehicle

assessment rate ahead of an expected increase on Jan. 1, 2027.

The state property tax rate is based on the revenue generated from the increase in taxable real property assessments from 2025 to 2026. If the increase in revenue is more than four percent after the exclusion of both new properties added to the tax roll during 2025, and the property subject to Tax Increment Financing, then the prior year's rate must be reduced.

The 2025 State Real

Property Tax Rate was 10.6 cents per \$100 of assessed value. Because the assessment increase for 2026 is estimated at 6.48 percent, the state real property tax rate must be reduced to 10.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value to keep state revenues from real property tax to no more than a four percent increase over the 2025 receipts.

Revenue generated from the state property tax rate is deposited into the state's General Fund.