



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Protection or Privacy

The 2001 Patriot Act



Claim and Focus

The essay introduces a compelling, clear, and arguable claim, based on the topic (“the Patriot Act brings a false sense of security to the nation”). The writing maintains a strong focus on the purpose and task. The whole essay supports and develops the claim and counterclaims fairly while thoroughly addressing the demands of the prompt.



Support and Evidence

The essay cites relevant and appropriate evidence to support its claim. Counterclaims are explained and distinguished from the essay’s central claim (“Supporters for the Patriot Act do exist, however”). The essay demonstrates reasoning and a full understanding of the topic.



Organization

An organizational structure is present with clear transitional words and phrases that enhance the relationships between ideas (“However, they fail to acknowledge that the Patriot Act worked in conjunction with brave citizens and pure luck”). Ideas progress logically from beginning to end with an effective introduction and conclusion (“no government should have that kind of power over its citizens”).



Language and Style

The essay demonstrates a definitive perspective (“assuming they are wrongdoers without any actual evidence”). The language is engaging (“Our great country is built on the abiding principles of liberty and freedom”) and effectively maintains a formal style and objective tone. The essay employs vivid word choice and varied sentence structure.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

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Notes

The 2001 Patriot Act

Our great country is built on the abiding principles of liberty and freedom. The terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, caused our nation much distress and mourning, and led us to a new way of living. The fear of a suddenly all-too-real danger made it very easy for the American government to come together, forget bipartisan politics, and pass the Patriot Act, only 45 days after these attacks. People were suddenly willing to forego basic rights in the name of safety. In short, the Patriot Act allows the government access to mail and email records, arresting and detaining suspects on the basis of suspicion alone, and allows for "Sneak & Peek" warrants. Unfortunately, with no documented history of terrorist prevention, higher authority taking too much dominance of society, and invasion of the nation's privacy with futile solutions, the Patriot Act brings a false sense of security to the nation. The Patriot Act is ineffective, and should therefore be permanently abolished.

One major component of the Patriot Act allows the government to access citizens' homes, phone records, emails, and other personal information without virtue of a warrant. In fact, as stated in Fight the Patriot Act, "The NSA and FBI use the Patriot Act to collect the phone records of millions of people who have never even been suspected or accused of a crime" (Source 2). So while suspicion of guilt is enough to obtain this information on a suspected terrorist, citing safety above privacy, the government can track any citizen's information, regardless of whether they are a suspect of terrorism or not. This blatant violation of American 4th Amendment rights is simply wrong. The 4th Amendment guarantees "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against

unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause." The government should physically do something about actual and valid suspects rather than examine "possible" suspects, assuming they are wrongdoers without any actual evidence. Maybe they are desperate to find a name of a "terrorist," because our nation finds security in knowing a name, but unfortunately for the law-abiding citizens, going through private citizens' personal data seems the most efficient way for the government to accomplish this.

The Patriot Act has given massive amounts of power to the National Security Agency (NSA), however it has done so with little reason or justification. In fact, there is plenty of evidence that indicates that the Patriot Act is ineffective. The Patriot Act was supposed to help catch terrorists and convict them but it has not successfully done so. An example of this occurred between the years of 2003-06 when the FBI issued 192,499 National Security Letters. Only 1 out of those 192,499 letters led to a terror-related conviction, which would have happened even without the Patriot Act. (Source 5) The Act should be reformed to make it useful in its efforts to fight terrorism. One way it could accomplish this is to have probable cause before wiretapping or collecting people's phone data. Collecting random information from random people isn't sufficiently focused to bring credible charges of terrorism.

Many people who support the Patriot Act might say that they have nothing to hide and that statement is probably true for the majority of people, but just think how our lives would be different with the government having comprehensive access to such information throughout history. The U.S. wouldn't even exist because England would have seen the plans of the colonists who wished to rebel and could have prevented their acts. Much later in our history, civil rights protesters would have been stopped dead in their tracks before they could have gotten people to rally against unfair laws. Finally, the Patriot Act does not have enough checks and balances to ensure that the government doesn't overstep. What if our government were to

become corrupt and abuse their ability to pull information from phone and email records? There would be no way to overthrow that tyrannical government because they could quickly identify and squash any resistance that appeared. The Patriot Act has all of the power but none of the responsibility of fair and accountable actions.

Supporters for the Patriot Act do exist, however. These supporters draw upon multiple cases (much like the 30 described in source 5) in which the Patriot Act directly prevented terrorist attacks and have broken up terrorist cells and communications. In a majority of these cases, many lives were saved as a result of government action. Thomas Anderson even suggests that "The Patriot Act is one of the most significant tools Congress has given to law enforcement to combat the people that want to kill Americans on U.S. soil" (Source 3). However, those same people fail to acknowledge that the Patriot Act worked in conjunction with brave citizens and pure luck. (Source 5)

In conclusion, the Patriot Act is far less efficient and less of a protection than the government would have American citizens believe. The Act helps to abolish many obstacles that the government may have when sharing and receiving data and/or evidence from other foreign countries, and no government should have that kind of power over its citizens. Responsible citizens should petition their local Congressmen to vote to eliminate the Patriot Act.