

We must support efforts to defund the NSA's spying programs

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Congressional Republican [Justin Amash](#) [1] has a not-so-novel idea for quashing the NSA's surveillance programs — [defund them](#) [2]. Rep. Amash is pushing for an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill that would strangle federal spying programs by tying the purse strings.

And let's be clear — this is largely a token gesture. With the NSA behemoth supported by heavyweights up to and including President Obama, the bill is a shot in the dark. But it's an important piece of political brinksmanship, and we need to keep Big Brother in the public eye.

"Most important bill this week: DoD Approps. We can defund #NSA's unconstitutional spying on Americans — if House leaders allow amendments," Amash [tweeted](#) [3] Monday.

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When President Obama's controversial healthcare law went south for Republicans, critics suggested cutting off its lifeblood in Congress, which controls the purse strings. It was an entirely symbolic gesture — any effort to defund or repeal "Obamacare" would meet stiff resistance in the Senate and a certain veto from the man, himself. But critics and elected officials felt it was important to legitimize their complaints. It's in this same vein that Rep. Amash (and like-minded politicians) are trying to quell the surveillance programs at the source.

And this cannot be overstated — if you support privacy rights and oppose the NSA's unconstitutional spying efforts, then it's important to support Rep. Amash.

The Michigan Republican has spearheaded the efforts to defund the surveillance programs and previously [called for the resignation](#) [4] of NSA Director, James Clapper, over his denial of such programs and alleged perjury. Back in March, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) asked Clapper, "Does the NSA collect any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?"

His [response](#) [5]: "No, sir. There are cases where they could inadvertently perhaps collect [intelligence on Americans], but not wittingly."

Clapper later sought to clarify his remarks (emphasis mine):

"I thought, though in retrospect, I was asked a 'When are you going to stop beating your wife' kind of question, which is ... not answerable necessarily by a simple yes or no ... So I responded in what I thought was the most truthful, or **least untruthful manner** by saying 'no.'"

This just in: Elected officials lie (or spout fantasies that are "minimally untruthful").

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We must support Rep. Amash's efforts. And since the NSA's surveillance programs (and a bloated federal bureaucracy) will dominate the midterm elections, it's important to vote for elected officials who support privacy rights. A token gesture has all the meaning we attach to it.

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Links:

- [1] <http://amash.house.gov/>
- [2] <http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20130715/17333823810/rep-justin-amash-pushing-to-strip-nsas-funding-with-amendment-to-defense-appropriations-bill.shtml>
- [3] <https://twitter.com/repjustinamash/status/356804467540234241>
- [4] <http://thehill.com/blogs/defcon-hill/policy-and-strategy/305031-rep-amash-calls-for-dni-clapper-to-resign>
- [5] <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/304697-wyden-wants-investigation-into-clappers-testimony-on-nsa-surveillance>