

JOURNAL-ADVOCATE

EDITORIAL

A good vote

Rep. Marilyn Musgrave did the right thing. This newspaper has published several news stories and editorials about the dangers posed by the misnamed Patriot Act, and its role in a growing trend towards increased government secrecy and decreased protection of our civil liberties.

Our congresswoman was the sole Republican to vote against giving the FBI access to personal records from libraries and bookstores. These "sneak and peak" efforts — which currently include giving law enforcement the right to enter homes without first serving a warrant — runs counter to every right guaranteed to us by the Constitution.

"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated" is how the Fourth

Amendment of the Constitution reads. Government has the right to access them, but only after showing probable cause.

Implicit in this arrangement is the right of the accused to eventually hear the charges and evidence against them.

Under the Patriot Act, government has largely written itself a blank check to investigate anyone, for any reason, and without ever having to divulge who was investigated or why.

And the threshold of proof for such searches is lower than is the case for ordinary criminal cases.

Can you say you've not been targeted by this law? How would you ever know?

Rep. Musgrave did the right thing in opposing this measure, and deserves to be congratulated. We go on record as doing so.