

# Sanders wins Patriot rollback

## Measure halts book probes but faces likely Bush veto

**By Erin Kelly**

*Free Press Washington Writer*

WASHINGTON — In the first major victory for critics of the Patriot Act, the House on Wednesday approved legislation by Rep. Bernie Sanders to repeal a portion of the controversial anti-terrorism law enacted in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

The Vermont independent won a 238-187 vote to throw out the Patriot Act section that makes it easier for federal agents to find out what books people have purchased from stores or borrowed from libraries.

Thirty-eight Republicans joined Sanders and 199 Democrats to approve the bill.

“It was a great victory. I’m very proud of the work done by Vermont librarians and booksellers.”

**Rep. Bernie Sanders**



President Bush has threatened a veto of the legislation, which is attached to a sweeping spending bill that funds the Justice Department along with the departments of State and Commerce.

Sanders would need to in-

crease his support by 52 votes to overturn a presidential veto — something he acknowledged would be virtually impossible. A two-thirds majority, or 290 votes, is necessary to thwart the president.

“We will see what hap-

pens,” Sanders said. “People say things and then back off. Hopefully, the president understands that the momentum is changing on this issue.”

Wednesday’s vote was especially sweet for Sanders, who came close to winning on the issue last year but failed when GOP leaders persuaded some Republicans to change their votes after they were cast.

“It was a great victory,” Sanders said. “I’m very proud of the work done by Vermont

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librarians and booksellers who have been in the forefront of developing a nationwide grass-roots movement that helped us enormously. I'm also proud that the Vermont Legislature was one of seven in the nation to vote (expressing) concern about the Patriot Act."

Sanders said the House vote reflects what most Americans believe.

"All of us — everyone in Congress and all Americans — are concerned about terrorism and want to do everything we can to protect the Ameri-

can people," Sanders said. "But we can and must do it in a way that does not undermine the basic freedoms that make this country great."

Opponents of Sanders' legislation said federal investigators need every tool at their disposal to ferret out potential terrorists, both foreign and domestic.

"There is no evidence of abuse," said Rep. Dan Lungen, R-Calif. "You have to go before the FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) Court and show that the records you're trying to get are related to international terror-

ism. You can't just go willy-nilly in and ask for any document you want."

Rep. Chris Shays, R-Conn., said Sanders' amendment could thwart the ability of federal law enforcement agents to stop a terrorist attack.

"We want to prevent a crime. Don't you get it?" Shays said.

Sanders said the potential for abuse is great.

"The FBI need not show probable cause, nor even reasonable grounds to believe that the person whose records it seeks is engaged in criminal activities," Sanders said. "The

simple truth is that the FBI could spy on a person because they don't like the books she reads or because she wrote a letter to the editor critical of a governmental policy. That is not what America is supposed to be about."

Sanders forged a compromise in part by deleting a section of his legislation that would have made it tougher for federal agents to find out what people are reading on the Internet at the library. The bill approved Wednesday applies only to books.