

November 4, 2003

Dear Mayor Fargo and Members of the Sacramento City Council:

Sacramento Therapists for Social Responsibility and the Sacramento Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers are organizations dedicated to addressing social and political issues that affect the mental and emotional health of the people of our communities.

As such, we wish to go on record as being adamantly opposed to the USA Patriot Act, which gives the government unprecedented freedom to collect information with little regard to civil rights or privacy concerns.

The part of the USA Patriot Act that specifically alarms us as mental health professionals is section 215, because it:

- Expands the ability of the federal government to conduct secret searches and gain access to confidential medical, psychiatric, and other health care records
- Allows these records to be obtained without showing probable cause that the person under investigation is engaged in criminal activity
- Prohibits health care providers from disclosing to their clients that their records have been seized, and
- Establishes potential penalties for noncompliance by the therapist.

The USA Patriot Act undermines the therapist/client relationship through the use of expanded powers, without demonstrating that these powers are necessary to keep us safe.

We strongly urge you to protect the civil rights and freedoms of the people of the City of Sacramento by voting in favor of the resolution currently before the City Council entitled "Resolution by the Sacramento City Council Affirming Civil Liberties and Opposing the Infringement of such Liberties by the Federal Government," as have many other cities.

Respectfully submitted,

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