



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on July 31, 2013

Reps Who Voted Against Amash Got Millions in Defense Industry Donations

“Follow the money.” That was the infamous counsel given by the informant “Deep Throat” to the reporters investigating the Watergate scandal.

That direction seems to still hold true some 40 years later.

A new study reveals that the representatives who [voted against the effort by Justin Amash \(R-Mich.\)](#) to curtail the authority of the National Security Agency (NSA) to conduct wholesale surveillance of millions of Americans received twice as much in donations from defense contractors as their colleagues who stood with Amash.



What is remarkable about the report from a partisan point of view is that the amount of money accepted from the military industrial complex was a better indicator of how a lawmaker voted than the letter after his or her name.

In fairness, the congressmen who voted to permit the NSA to continue collecting data in defiance of the Fourth Amendment didn’t sell their votes cheaply.

The funds donated by political action committees, employees, and directors of the country’s wealthiest defense contractors totaled nearly \$13 million over two years.

An analysis by *The New American* of the [information published by MapLight](#) (based on data gleaned from OpenSecrets) reveals that a “no” vote on the Amash amendment (remember, a no vote was a vote to continue the NSA’s unconstitutional surveillance of phone records) was worth about \$41,000. A representative who voted “yes,” on the other hand, could count on only about \$18,700 from the defense and intelligence sector’s slush fund.

Even a cursory glance at the chart published in the MapLight report reveals that of the top 10 recipients of the defense donations, only Representative Jim Moran (D-Va.) voted in favor of the Amash amendment and against green lighting the federal government’s surveillance activities.

Expanding the search to the top 20, the number of “yes” votes doubles to two: Representative Joe Courtney (D-Conn.) voted to end the collection of phone records.

Moran (who ranked 9th on the list) received \$152,500 and Courtney (16th on the list of donees) pocketed \$130,500.

Notably, of the 11 members of the House of Representatives who earned a 100-percent rating on The [John Birch Society Freedom Index](#), only Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) voted against the Amash amendment. Bachmann received \$25,000 from the corporate sector whose business would most likely be damaged by a reduction in the surveillance of Americans.



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What does this mean? MapLight's president and co-founder fears the worst.

"How can we trust legislators to vote in the public interest when they are dependent on industry campaign funding to get elected? Our broken money and politics system forces lawmakers into a conflict of interest between lawmakers' voters and their donors," said Daniel G. Newman, [as quoted in Wired](#).

As readers may remember, the [Amash amendment](#) would have revoked authority "for the blanket collection of records under the Patriot Act. It would also bar the NSA and other agencies from using Section 215 of the Patriot Act to collect records, including telephone call records, that pertain to persons who are not subject to an investigation under Section 215" of the Patriot Act.

Despite the threat to the establishment (or perhaps because of it), Amash's measure failed by a vote of 205-217.

As indicated above, Representative Michele Bachman (R-Minn.) took the money and then took a stand against liberty, warning her fellow Republicans that if the federal government's surveillance power was curtailed, "Islamic jihad" would go unchecked, leaving the homeland vulnerable to the attacks of al-Qaeda and its associates.

Amash rightly regards the threat from the extremists in Washington to be greater than that posed by those in Waziristan. Besides, Amash tweeted, the government doesn't fear Muslim terrorists, "they fear you."

Not surprisingly, the establishment marched in lock step to oppose Amash.

Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-Ohio) was the poster child of bipartisan support for the surveillance state. His vote virtually ensured that those in his party jockeying for future leadership nods would follow suit, even at the expense of the Fourth Amendment and the liberties it protects.

"I voted last night because these NSA programs have helped keep Americans safe," Boehner said, after the vote. "There are, in my view, ample safeguards to protect the privacy of the American people," he said. "And I know how these programs have worked. I know how they've worked to protect the American people and I felt very strongly about it," he added.

Boehner's Democratic counterpart, Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) was a little less enthusiastic about her support for the spreading of the surveillance dragnet. "I don't want anybody to misunderstand a vote against the Amash resolution yesterday," [Pelosi said](#).

The MapLight data reveal that Boehner came in 15th in defense dollars, walking away with \$131,000. Although farther down the trough, Pelosi was not left out of the slop line. The House minority leader pocketed \$47,000 over two years from the very industry she voted to protect.

Photo is of Crystal City, a section of Virginia mainly devoted to defense contractors' lobbyists

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