

Weekly Passage:

Should secret wiretapping be legal?

Alina Woods was talking to her cousin in Mexico over the phone. She remembered hearing about wiretapping on the news. Apparently the government was listening to international telephone conversations. They were doing this so they could know if terrorists were planning attacks. Alina wondered if someone was listening to her conversation.

After the September 11th attacks, President Bush told the National Security Agency (NSA) to pay attention to conversations between Americans and foreigners who were suspicious. The NSA could tap phone calls, email, and text messages as sources of information. He told them to do this in secret, notwithstanding the fact that they were supposed to ask a court for permission. But President Bush said this was necessary to keep the country safe. He called this the Protect America Act.

Some people defend this Act because they think it will protect Americans from terrorists. They think it is important to listen to people's conversations and read their e-mails if they are suspicious. Also, this act eliminates any possible delays in getting information about possible terrorists because the government does not have to wait for a judge's permission. It will help keep America safe.

Other people are against the act, notwithstanding the need for safety and security. They think wiretapping violates a person's right to privacy. The main problem for opponents is that the Act allows the President the power to spy without warning or court permission. These people think the price we are paying for security is too high.

What do you think? Should secret wiretapping to help the government catch terrorists be legal? Or do you think, notwithstanding the risks of a possible attack, nobody should be able to spy on our conversations without telling us? Where do you stand? Remember someone may be listening!