

UNITED STATES SENATE

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

William V. Roth Jr., Chairman
 Warren B. Rudman, Vice Chairman
 Sam Nunn, Ranking Minority Member

FOR RELEASE
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SENATORS PROPOSE SECURITY CLEARANCE REFORM

Washington, D.C. -- Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), joined by Senators William V. Roth, Jr. (R-Del.), Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.), Albert Gore, Jr. (D-Tenn.) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) introduced legislation today to close one of the most critical loopholes in our federal government's current security clearance program. "The problem is the growing inability of Department of Defense, Office of Personnel Management, and Central Intelligence Agency investigators to obtain state and local criminal justice records on individuals being considered for access to classified information or sensitive national security duties," said Senator Nunn.

This legislation resulted from an investigation of the government's security clearance program that was initiated by Senator Nunn as Ranking Minority Member of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. With the support and cooperation of Senator Roth, the Subcommittee Chairman, hearings were held this past April where a number of shortcomings in our security clearance program were exposed.

"Clearly, one of the most basic and productive sources of information in personnel security investigations should be local criminal justice records. Our Subcommittee was amazed to learn that local and State jurisdictions in increasing numbers are denying Defense Investigative Service, Office of Personnel Management and Central Intelligence Agency agents access to their criminal history files," said Senator Nunn. "The net result is that this important source of information is being seriously curtailed in many localities throughout the country."

Senator Nunn added, "Such a situation would be ludicrous if it did not have such far reaching and dangerous implications. Currently, the United States Government is unable to obtain State and local criminal records on applicants for some of the most sensitive positions in the military and other government agencies. Given recent events, one can hardly doubt our continuing need for a strong and effective security clearance system.

Subcommittee Chairman Roth said, "The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. Without access to state and local government criminal justice information, we might as well be shooting craps in granting security clearances. It is imperative to know how an applicant has comported himself in his own community. By relying solely on Federal indices, as we must often do today, we risk clearing everyone but those who appear on the F.B.I.'s Ten Most Wanted List."

Senator Nunn stated, "Faced with the current status of our personnel security system it is not surprising that we now have more people under indictment for espionage than we have had at any time since World War II. Hostile intelligence services are not overly intimidated by a government personnel security program like this where the proverbial left-hand of the government does not know nor is allowed to know what the right-hand does."

The proposed bill specifically authorizes the federal government to obtain access to local criminal justice records when conducting eligibility investigations for (1) access to classified information, (2) assignment to or retention in sensitive national security duties, or (3) acceptance or retention in the armed services. Such a request is only permitted if the person under investigation consents to it in writing. Moreover, the criminal history record information obtained pursuant to this request would be afforded the same protections as provided by the Privacy Act.

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