

Government's data collection should be watched

As Benjamin Franklin once observed, "Those who surrender freedom for security will not have, nor do they deserve, either one."

Like a growing number of Americans, I am increasingly concerned about the current administration's obvious disregard for the public's inalienable right to know 1) what information is being gathered about them and 2) how that information is being used.

Reporters Without Borders is an international, nonprofit organization devoted to fighting censorship in all forms. Each year they assess governments around the world on their commitment to transparency. In their latest report, the United States ranked 46th – just above Haiti and right below Romania.

As noted on their website, "The ranking of some countries has also been affected by a tendency to interpret national security needs in an overly broad and abusive manner to the detriment of the right to inform and be informed. This trend constitutes a growing threat worldwide and is even endangering freedom of information in countries regarded as democracies."

I understand the need for national security. At the same time, we should all be acutely aware of the atrocities sometimes committed under the guise of keeping us safe.

As the global population escalates exponentially, our survival is no doubt linked to data-driven decision-making on a relatively large scale. Still, there is something distinctly Orwellian about the intrusive nature and

scope of the administration's current surveillance programs.

All data can be used for both good as well as evil purposes. Some obviously see the ongoing generation and acquisition of more and more information about every detail of our personal lives in a positive light.

Personally, I believe we need to be much more concerned about the potential downside of these practices. And we need to voice those concerns loudly.

Eternal vigilance is indeed the price of liberty.

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