

GENERAL ELECTION 2015 GUIDE FOR ORG SUPPORTERS

WHY IS THIS GENERAL ELECTION SO IMPORTANT?

- ➔ It's the first general election since Edward Snowden revealed that the NSA and GCHQ are collecting all of our communications data. Over the last 18 months, there have been numerous attempts to increase the surveillance powers of the security services and the police. We have to tell politicians that these ideas are vote losers.
- ➔ It is likely that the next Government will be a coalition and this could mean negotiations around specific issues, such as surveillance and civil liberties. This also gives smaller parties the opportunity to influence the debate in ways in which they could not before.

WHY FOCUS ON MASS SURVEILLANCE?

There are many digital issues that we could ask candidates about – including data protection, copyright reform, online censorship and TTIP – but we want to focus on mass surveillance. We think this is the biggest threat to our right to privacy right now and that by focussing on this issue, we can have the most impact.

THE MAIN PARTIES' POSITIONS

At the time of going to print, the parties had not published their manifestos. When they do, we'll publish an updated version of this document on the ORG website. Here are their positions based on previous statements and actions.

Conservatives

The Prime Minister, Home Secretary and other Conservative members of the coalition have defended surveillance by the security services and also called for an extension of surveillance powers. The coalition Government introduced the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2014 (DRIPA), a law that forces ISPs to keep all of our data. It is likely that they will want to introduce a law based on the discredited Communications Data Bill, also known as the Snoopers' Charter. A number of Conservative MPs remain opposed to extending surveillance powers and some voted against the fast-tracking of DRIPA.

Labour

Labour have supported the status quo when it comes to mass surveillance. The majority of their MPs supported DRIPA, though some rebelled on its fast-tracking. We expect Labour to say they will improve oversight of surveillance and they have not announced any plans to extend surveillance powers through an act such as the Communications Data Bill. However, we don't think their plans will go far enough to truly reform mass surveillance.

Lib Dems

As part of the Coalition government, the Lib Dems supported DRIPA (again some rebelled) but they did stop the Snoopers' Charter. We expect that their manifesto commitments will be positive including commitments to no new Snoopers' Charter, wholesale reform of surveillance laws and greater oversight.

Greens

The Greens have been critical of mass surveillance and are likely to agree with the Don't Spy on Us (DSOU) campaign's Six Principles. They opposed DRIPA.

UKIP

UKIP have said things both in favour and critical of GCHQ's activities and state surveillance.

SNP

We expect the SNP to make demands to reform surveillance and oversight.

For a list of MPs of all parties who voted against the fast-tracking of the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act (DRIPA) go to: openrightsgroup.org/blog/2014/drip-heroes

WHAT DOES ORG WANT FROM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT?

- ➔ No extension of existing surveillance powers, such as the introduction of the discredited Communications Data Bill or laws that would ban or allow the weakening of some encryption products.
- ➔ Reform of existing surveillance legislation and powers, along the six principles of the Don't Spy on Us campaign. This would broadly mean targeted surveillance that is necessary and proportionate, warrants that are signed by judges not politicians, stronger oversight and the right to redress. You can point prospective parliamentary candidates to the DSOU website where there is a guide on what we would like them to do: dontspyonus.org.uk/blog

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Talk to candidates and canvassers who come to your door

We've enclosed a poster for you to display to encourage candidates who are standing for parliament to knock on your door. This guide includes questions you can ask and the responses that you might get.

Hustings

Go along to hustings and ask what the candidates would do about surveillance. ORG has organised civil liberty hustings and there is still one more to go in Manchester (see openrightsgroup.org/events/) You can find other hustings and events in your area at: meetyournextmp.com

Find out what your candidate thinks about surveillance

Visit <https://election.openrightsgroup.org/> and pop in your postcode to see what your candidates have said. This should be up and running by April 17. (Huge thanks to Grit Digital for helping us build this!)

Email candidates

You can find candidates' email addresses from yournextmp.com and email them the questions below.

Tweet, get online and get in touch with the local media

The DSOU campaign has produced a media guide that you can use to get the message out during the election. It includes sample Tweets, Facebook posts and an example letter to your local newspaper. The media pack is available at: dontspyonus.org.uk/blog

WHAT TO SAY TO CANDIDATES AND CANVASSERS

You will only get a minute or so with a candidate. Parties brief them to meet and greet as many people as quickly as they can. So you need to be very quick and make the most important point to you. You may get a chance to respond to their answer. Say you will follow up with them.

Canvassers ask you how you will vote and what concerns you. You can tell them you are worried about surveillance powers. They may not have a lot of policy knowledge as they are usually volunteers rather than party workers. Tell canvassers you are undecided on who to vote for. This can give them the opportunity to call over the candidate to talk to you.

Remember that you don't have to actually convince them of your arguments. It's enough to make sure that candidates know what your view is.

Here are some key points and questions that you can ask candidates and canvassers:

- Laws such as RIPA have loopholes that allow mass surveillance. They have also allowed many organisations to access our personal data. Will you fight for a reform of surveillance laws?
- Currently, warrants for surveillance are signed off by ministers not judges. Don't you think judges are better placed than politicians to make these decisions?
- The Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) don't have the independence or the expertise to fully understand what the security services are doing and to hold them to account. Will you argue for more independent, better resourced oversight mechanisms?
- I'm worried that the security agencies are collecting data about everyone. Will you fight for surveillance to be limited to those who are suspected of a crime?

A good way to end your conversation will be to say:

- Most MPs had no idea about GCHQ's surveillance until the Snowden leaks. Shouldn't MPs at least have a debate and vote on this?

Nobody can disagree with this. You will have made a serious point they cannot ignore.

RESPONSES YOU MIGHT GET AND HOW TO COUNTER THEM

We need to sacrifice our privacy for security

We all have a right to privacy and it should only be invaded if we are suspected of a crime. Furthermore, GCHQ's activities are undermining internet security and could make us all more vulnerable to criminal attacks.

Terrorism is a real threat to our country

It is but there is no evidence that collecting everyone's data protects us. The killers who murdered Lee Rigby and carried out the Charlie Hebdo killings were known to the security agencies. How do you know that resources are being focused in the right way?

GCHQ have to collect everything so that they can search for needles in the haystack

That sounds like they are examining everyone to see if we look like suspects, which reverses the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. Surveillance should only be used when there is suspicion.

If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear

That isn't true. Surveillance has been used against journalists, whistleblowers and human rights activists. Most of us want to keep parts of our lives private.

KEY DATES

April 16: BBC Election Debate 2015 on BBC One hosted by David Dimbleby and featuring the leaders of Labour, UKIP, the SNP, the Greens and Plaid Cymru.

April 20: Last date to register to vote

April 21: Last date to register for a postal vote

Apr 24: ORG hustings event in Manchester: openrightsgroup.org/events

April 28: Last date to register to vote by proxy

April 30: BBC Question Time hosted by David Dimbleby in front of a studio audience, featuring individual interviews with David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg. Get tickets by searching online for 'BBC Question Time Join the Audience'

May 7: VOTE!