

US House passes controversial surveillance bill on fourth attempt

WASHINGTON, April 12 (Reuters) – The Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives voted to reauthorize a controversial surveillance program on Friday, in a major step toward keeping a key element of the United States' foreign intelligence-gathering operation in place.

The House passed a bill reauthorizing Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act in a 273-147 vote. The FISA bill now moves to the Senate, which is expected to give it bipartisan approval. Without congressional action, the program will expire on April 19.

Approval came after the duration of the bill was changed to two years from a previous version of five years, as some Republicans had sought.

FISA has attracted criticism from both Republican and Democratic lawmakers, who argue it violates Americans' constitutional right to privacy. The bill was blocked three times in the past five months by House Republicans bucking their party.

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