

In 2009, while I was serving on the House Judiciary Committee, we were approached by the Secret Service with a problem: while federal law prevented people from trespassing into restricted areas while the President, Vice President, or other individuals under their protection were traveling, those protections did not extend to the White House or Naval Observatory, where the Vice President lives.

As a result of this loophole in a law that had been in place since 1971, when someone jumped the fence at the White House or otherwise breached the White House grounds, the Secret Service did not have the authority to detain them. Instead, they had to call the District of Columbia police, who could only charge them a D.C. trespassing misdemeanor – whereas violating other federal restricted grounds was a federal crime. That made no sense.

So in the last Congress I introduced the Federal Restricted Buildings and Grounds Improvement Act, which made a technical change to existing law to include the President's and Vice President's residents in the definition of federal restricted grounds. The bill passed in the House Judiciary Committee and the full House of Representatives, but was not considered in the Senate.

Last year, I reintroduced the bill. Once again, it passed the House Judiciary Committee without objection and passed in the full House with just three dissenting votes. It also passed the Senate by unanimous consent. Every Senator and almost every member of the House supported the bill, and the President signed into law.

Since the bill, a number of false claims have surfaced about what the bill does. The fact is, it does nothing to curb your right to protest, and it certainly has no impact on what you can say at any time, whether secret service is present or not.

Here are the facts about what this bill actually does:

This was a small technical correction to existing law. It did one thing - transfer arresting authority from DCPD to Secret Service when someone jumps the fence at the White House or the Naval Observatory. It does not affect anyone's right to protest anywhere, any time in any

way. Any claim that it does impact those rights is blatantly false.

The nonpartisan fact-checking organization [FactCheck.org](http://factcheck.org) has reviewed this issue and concluded that the accusations made by opponents of this bill are false, calling it a “manufactured controversy” consisting of “bogus claims.” I encourage you to read their analysis here: <http://factcheck.org/2012/05/obama-criminalize-free-speech/>.

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