

Patricia (Tish) Speed Schwartz
Chief Clerk/Administrator, House Committee on the Judiciary

Events: September 11, 2001

The USA PATRIOT Act

Personal account of how the anthrax attacks affected the legislative process.

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Now, what was interesting, I talked to my boss, and our, our chief counsel, our staff director and our legislative counselor, we're all in the Speaker's Office, along with a lot of our Democratic counterparts, and they were crammed into this office, on the floor, writing on yellow tablets, and cutting and pasting, and I said, "You what?" He said, "Well, we can't get, we can't get on the computers, there's only one up in this suite, so we have to resort to cutting and pasting." And what they were doing was, the committee had reported out the USA PATRIOT Act, and they were getting it ready, the bill to draw up for the floor, as a bipartisan approach. So, they were cutting, pasting, taping, and that's what they were doing. So, they were still up on the Hill, and I just found it ironic how we went totally back to pre-technology days, and it just really hits home that you really have to have it together. But the only way they could do that—they had everybody in that core group over in the Speaker's Office, so they had legislative counsel there, they had the GPO people there, so they could get everything together and get it printed. But that was how it was done during that week and a half we were facing anthrax.