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Media Relations
and Marketing
9 Anderson Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506-0117
785-532-6415
Fax: 785-532-6418
E-mail: media@k-state.edu
www.mediarelations.k-state.edu

Source: Paul Ibbetson, 785-317-6624, ibbetson@k-state.edu
News release prepared by: Keener A. Tippin II, 785-532-6415, media@k-state.edu

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K-STATE GRADUATE STUDENT PENS BOOK ABOUT PATRIOT ACT

MANHATTAN — Paul Ibbetson has three special passions in his life: criminal justice, sociology and political science.

Ibbetson, a Kansas State University graduate student in sociology, Wichita, was able to combine those three passions into one project: a book on the Patriot Act, scheduled to be released by Author House Publishing this fall.

The book, "Living Under the Patriot Act: Educating A Society," examines The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001, or the federal law better known as the Patriot Act.

The controversial piece of federal legislation was signed into law by President George W. Bush in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The legislation dramatically expanded the authority of American law enforcement for the stated purpose of fighting terrorist acts in the U.S. and abroad. It also has been used to detect and prosecute other alleged potential crimes such as providing false information on terrorism.

As a former police chief in southeast Kansas, Ibbetson had spent a lot of time studying state statutes. But he didn't start studying the Patriot Act until 2002.

"I did what a lot of people do. I went online and pulled up the original text, assuming that I could read it and understand it," he said.

But Ibbetson found reading and comprehending the Patriot Act a difficult thing to do, which is why he wrote a book about it.

"I try to put into context some of the frustrations a lot of people have had in trying to learn about the Patriot Act," Ibbetson said. "My goal was to educate as opposed to advocate. I'm driven to reach the common man, but I hope the content will be stimulating to academics as well."

(more)

While Ibbetson also has written conservative columns, he said the goal of his book is not to sway people to be for or against the Patriot Act. He said he wanted to provide information and allow readers draw their own conclusions.

The book has two main parts. The first part discusses the original act that was passed in 2001 and offers his analysis of several provisions of the act that have drawn scrutiny, such as detention of terrorist suspects. He also compares the Patriot Act to other historical legislation enacted by the government during times of crisis.

"That's something that a lot of times doesn't get covered," Ibbetson said. "We know people who are for it for that reason, or against it for this reason, but we can't really say what's been done in the past."

Additional chapter in the first part of the book define what actions fall under the act; what qualifies an individual or group as a terrorist, either domestic or international; the act from several different sociological theories; and what individuals and organizations oppose the act, their stance on the act as a whole and what sections of the act trouble them.

The second half of the book deals with the recent renewal of the act.

"I tried to cover the major players and events that took place that would push the process forward and pull it back," Ibbetson said. "I cover the failure of legislators to meet the deadline, the first and second extensions and the inevitable renewal."

Ibbetson said the book, a culmination of more than three years of research which started while he was a graduate student at Wichita State University, reads like a movie.

"Most of it the public is not aware of things that took place," he said. "I think it also is important that the book is not meant to be an end-all resource. What it is meant to be is a tool to stimulate the reader to want to continue to research the act."

Ibbetson said the latest version of the Patriot Act will expire in 2009 and the nation likely will be faced with whether to renew it again. In the meantime, Ibbetson said he plans to keep studying it and analyzing if it should be renewed.

"We'll have this debate again," he said. "I'm not as interested in whether people support the legislation as I am in promoting a long-term interest in the future of this law. If that is the outcome, this book will have been a success."