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# Who Can Be Killed By a Drone?

Sen. Rand Paul has made no secret of his plan to run for president in 2016. Some say his filibuster last week was simply the first step in his presidential campaign. Maybe so, but there are worse places to begin than with this principle: that American citizens have the right to defend themselves against accusations of wrongdoing in a court of law.

That’s leadership. Thanks Sen. Paul for showing Congress how it’s done. But the debate must not stop here.

Since President Bush was in office and increasingly under President Obama, America has been using drone warfare to kill targets in Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia. Between 3,000 and 5,000 people – many of them civilians— have been killed in these attacks, including three Americans, one a 16-year-old boy.

All of this has occurred with practically no Congressional oversight or public discussion. Is this the kind of America we want – a country that justifies killing civilians with the press of a button, from a computer terminal thousands of miles

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

Bernie Foster



away? And dismisses those deaths as “collateral damage”? So could the administration use a military drone to kill a U.S. citizen on United States soil, bypassing the legal system

‘I wanted everybody to know that our Constitution is precious and no American should be killed by a drone’

and the civil rights of American citizens?

Paul asked Attorney General Eric Holder for an answer. “As Americans, we have fought long and hard for the Bill of Rights,” he wrote in the Washington Post last Saturday. “I wanted everybody to know that our Constitution is precious and no American should be killed by a drone without first

being charged with a crime.” Holder’s first response said drones would only be used in some unnamed “extraordinary circumstance.” That didn’t satisfy Paul.

After the filibuster, Holder sent another letter that went further: “Does the president have the authority to use a weaponized drone to kill an American not engaged in combat on American soil? No.”

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden has been pushing the administration to account for what it’s

Don’t accuse us of paranoia. It’s not a stretch to think that Americans might be deceived by our government. The “intelligence” that persuaded us to go to war with Iraq turned out to be a lie. The CIA has a long, dirty history of killing “enemies” in foreign countries, while pretending its hands are clean. Now, we’re supposed to believe that everyone who dies in a military drone strike is a terrorist or an enemy fighter. We’re sorry, but “just trust us” isn’t good enough. This is a 21st century democracy not a third-world country.

Who’s to say that a few years down the road, another president won’t decide to misuse executive authority to get rid of a rival, or for other reasons?

Shrouded in secrecy, the military drone program threatens America’s standing in the international community, as well as our safety here at home. We need an honest accounting of America’s military drone policy and how it is being used.

What do you think? Should the American public know how we decide who’s an enemy combatant and can be killed by a drone?

# Banksters: The Rich are Treated Differently

F. Scott Fitzgerald got it right when he said the rich are different.

We are witnessing that in the sequester fiasco and we heard it in another form last week when Attorney General Eric H. Holder offered an asinine reason for not prosecuting bankers/gangsters known as banksters.

Testifying before Congress, Holder said, “I am concerned that the size of some of these institutions becomes so large that it does become difficult for us to prosecute them when we are hit with indications that if you do prosecute, if you do bring a criminal charge, it will have a negative impact on the national economy, perhaps even the world economy.”

Holder is not the Secretary of Treasury. While he, like all of us, might be concerned about the economy, that’s not his area of responsibility. His job as the nation’s chief law enforcer is to enforce the law. And that should apply to banksters like it applies to gangsters. But, as we know, the rich and institutions they control are treated differently.

This variation of banks being “too big to fail” is essentially telling us their CEOs are “too big to jail.” If banks are too big to fail, we should remind ourselves who allowed them to grow that large. Each time big banks gobbled up smaller ones like ATMs suck in your check deposit, they had to first win approval from the federal government. That is the same federal government that bails them out when they get in trouble and the same federal government that now whines that their CEOs are too big to jail. Try explaining that to a first-time, non-violent drug user who is rotting away behind

bars. Even in clear-cut cases of gangster behavior, there is a double-standard. Take the case of HSBC,

## THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry



which signed a \$1.9 billion settlement with the U.S. after CEO Stuart Gulliver acknowledged the bank’s failure to catch at least \$881 million in drug trafficking money that was laundered through the institution’s accounts. Officials admitted their bank had facilitated illicit financial transfers on behalf of rogue nations, including Iran

almost five years since the financial crisis, but the big banks are still too big to fail. That means they are subsidized by about \$83 billion a year by American taxpayers and are still not being held fully accountable for breaking the law.”

The \$83 billion a year Warren referred to represents the amount taxpayers pay in insurance to make sure U.S. bank deposits are guaranteed.

Think about that. Banks are profit making entities yet the public pays their insurance. Does anyone else pay for your homeowner’s insurance? Health insurance? Car insurance? So why should the public share in banks’ expenses, but not their profits? It is yet another example of the rich and their powerful institutions being different?

Contrast that different treatment with what’s happening in our

to cave in when negotiating with Republicans – and that has many Democrats worried.

Obama and his advisers have already stated that they are amenable to a “grand bargain” whereby the White House and Republicans will reach an agreement on budget cuts.

So far, 107 of the 200 House Democrats have signed a letter to the president threatening to vote “against any and every cut to Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits – including raising the retirement age or cutting the cost of living adjustments that our constituents earned and need.”

In the alternative, they want the grand bargain to “rely on economic growth and more fair revenue-raising policies to solve our fiscal problems.” Those policies should include putting an end to subsidies for big businesses and raising the taxes on the wealthiest Americans.

Speaking on CNBC last week, House Speaker John Boehner said, “Listen, we’ve got a structural spending problem that has to be addressed. The president’s sequester is in effect, and it will be in effect until there’s an agreement on cuts and reforms that put us on a path to balance the budget over the next 10 years.”

But none of those cuts and reforms on the patch to a balanced budget involve touching the banksters or the rich. After all, as well all know, they are different.

*George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA.) He is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach.*

Policies should include putting an end to subsidies for big businesses and raising the taxes on the wealthiest Americans

and Libya, as well as Mexican and Colombian drug cartels.

Their punishment? A fine that equaled 11 percent of last year’s profits and a promise to do a better job of monitoring their accounts. And they avoided criminal prosecution.

Like other banks, HSBC will continue to benefit from American taxpayers underwriting its deposit insurance.

Senator Elizabeth Warren [D-Mass.] observed, “It has been

nation’s capital.

In the never-ending game of chicken, Republicans are threatening yet another budget showdown. They are adamant that whatever comes out of the ongoing sequester and deficit debates, all cuts must come from the spending side, including Medicare and Social Security.

Although President Obama has used strong, protective language in his State of the Union and inauguration speeches, he has a tendency