



Obama keeps showing why he is impeachable

Nat Hentoff

The very core of what makes America different from all other nations is our Constitution's separation of powers.

Here is James Madison in Federalist Paper No. 51: "In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty, it is evident that each department should have a will of its own; and consequently should be so constituted that the members of each should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others."

He went even further: "It is of great importance in a republic not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part."

But here comes our commander-in-chief, who customarily tosses the separation of powers into the nearest wastepaper basket. Dig this recent headline from bizpac.com, which summed up Barack Obama's approach to passing legislation in 2014: "I've got a pen and I've got a phone': Obama says he'll run right over Congress this year" (Michael Dorstewitz, Jan. 15).

Now Obama has been publicly glorifying the extent of his seemingly boundless executive powers, as Justin Snow reported for Metro Weekly:

"With a portrait of George Washington looking down at him, Obama told reporters gathered in the Cabinet Room of the White House" -- referring to his all-powerful "pen and phone" -- that he is ready to bypass Congress if necessary to get things done ("Obama's executive order problem," Justin Snow, Metro Weekly, Jan. 17).

Obama discussed taking "executive actions and administrative actions that move the ball forward in helping to make sure our kids are getting the best education possible and making sure that our businesses are getting the kind of support and help they need to grow and advance to make sure that people are getting the skills that they need to get those jobs that our businesses are creating."

Should any of you ever get the chance to be in Obama's royal presence, make sure to bow properly.

Meanwhile, that declaration reveals what can continue to happen for the rest of his reign unless a due process impeachment procedure soon becomes possible.

How can the impeachment process happen? We The People must be heard resoundingly, because -- as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson warned -- it's up to us to remain Americans.

Very soon after first taking office, as I've reported previously, President Obama actually prevented trials from being held accusing him of unilaterally using "renditions" -- kidnapping alleged terrorists from the streets of their countries to be taken to nations known for torturing suspects. He used the state secrets privilege to close off our system of justice more often than Bush ever did. Since then, Obama has not forbade renditions. And because renditions are classified, we don't know who has been taken where.

And as I often remind you, because most of the media has gone to sleep on this, in 2011, Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, which, for the first time in our history, permitted the military to arrest and detain U.S. citizens indefinitely -- including in this country -- for allegedly being "associated" with terrorists, without evidence presented before an American court.

If these reminders of Chinese justice don't add pressing cause for an impeachment investigation, what on earth will?

Jeffrey Kuhner of The Washington Times has written previously about Obama's expansion of power, which makes King George III look rather puny by comparison:

Back in March 2012, "the White House released an executive order, 'National Defense Resources Preparedness.' The document is stunning in its audacity and a flagrant violation of the Constitution. It states that, in case of a war or national emergency, the federal government has the authority to take over almost every aspect of American society. Food, livestock, farming equipment, manufacturing, industry, energy, transportation, hospitals, health care facilities, water resources, defense and construction."

All of this could come under the control of President Obama -- or whoever is holding the office.

"The order empowers the president to dispense these vast resources as he sees fit during a national crisis ...

"The executive branch is arrogating responsibilities precluded by the Constitution without even asking the permission of Congress. The order gives Mr. Obama a blank check to erect a centralized authoritarian state ..."

"The backdrop to the executive order is the looming showdown with Iran. The administration says the 'window for diplomacy is closing'" ("Obama's power grab," Jeffrey Kuhner, The Washington Times, March 22, 2012).

How much of this range of executive power, domestically and internationally, will remain under the next president? How much of it will animate the 2014 congressional campaigns, as well as the next presidential race? How many of us are even aware of these precedents that are being set for this America?

And as vacancies occur on the Supreme Court, who will be the next president to attempt to fill them?

This question haunts me more and more: How many kids in school now (and those to come) have any debatable idea of what's going on with our Constitution? Do they understand how Obama's uses of executive power have changed what used to be America's rule of law and our globally distinctive values?

Have I disturbed your sleep at all?