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Driving the Conversation:

Are "birthers" dangerous?

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Roger Pilon, Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute:

Are “birthers” dangerous? Only in the eyes of their counterparts on the other side. Still, they do have a point, however trivial it will likely turn out to be. Those who want to read a thoughtful treatment of the subject might see Andrew C. McCarthy’s July 30 **“Suborned in the U.S.A.”** at National Review Online. He’s the former U.S. attorney who successfully prosecuted the first (1993) World Trade Center bombers.

I have little doubt that President Obama was born in Hawaii, but the issue is a bit more complicated than birther critics have made it out to be. It turns out that the “certification of live birth,” which Obama has made available, has considerably less information, including signatures, than Hawaii’s “certificate of live birth,” which Obama has not made available. Obviously, he could settle this matter in an instant (except for the lunatic fringe), simply by asking that the “certificate” be made available. So why hasn’t he? Is there something in that certificate that he wants concealed? Or is it that he wants the issue, for its political value? Again, I have little doubt that there’s nothing here. So let’s resolve that “little doubt.” If we don’t, the issue could become dangerous.

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