

Energy Arena

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Driving the Conversation:

Arena Ref: [David Mark](#)

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Roger Pilon Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute :

Speaking expressly "as President" last evening, Obama has weighed in on the Ground Zero Islamic mosque controversy -- and blatantly misstated it.

This controversy has nothing to do with Muslims having "the same right to practice their religion as anyone else in this country" or with their "right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in lower Manhattan," as Obama put it. Nor does it have anything to do with the First Amendment. Rather, the issue is simply one of common decency and sensitivity to the feelings of others.

The president is right about one thing: Ground Zero is "hallowed ground." It is the ground where some 3,000 people of all faiths lost their lives in a brutal attack by radical Muslims acting in the name of their religion, however distorted their beliefs may have been. Those who lost loved ones that day, to say nothing of the rest of us, cannot be indifferent to that fact -- as those who support the mosque's location near Ground Zero seem to be.