

IS OBAMA PREPARING THE “VOTE FOR ME OR MITT WILL INDEFINITELY DETAIN YOU” PITCH?

Jesselyn Raddack [catches](#) Obama [promising](#) to start talking about civil liberties on the campaign trail.

So on every issue domestically we've got differences, and I haven't even – we haven't talked about the fact that my opponent feels comfortable with Washington making decisions about women's health care that women, Michelle tells me, are perfectly capable of making themselves. (Laughter and applause.)

We haven't talked about what's at stake with respect to the Supreme Court. We haven't talked about what's at stake with respect to civil liberties. [my emphasis]

Raddack proceeds to demonstrate the many ways that talking civil liberties won't help Obama.

But she's missing one thing. As I [noted](#) during the debate on the NDAA, Obama's apologists essentially adopted a “Vote for Obama or Newt (who was then leading the GOP pack) will indefinitely detain you” approach to the NDAA.

But don't worry about this breathtaking assertion of unlimited presidential authority, [Ken] Gude [suggests](#), because Obama's not a big military detention fan.

The Obama administration in word and deed has made it very clear that the president does not believe it necessary or appropriate to use military

detention authority in the United States. Both Omar Farouk Abdulmutallab and Faisal al-Shazaad were arrested after attempting mass casualty terrorist attacks inside the United States. In both instances, conservatives called for putting them in military detention, but in both instances, the Obama administration chose to use the criminal justice system.

There are just two problems with this (setting aside the grand claim that nothing can impinge on Presidential discretion on these matters).

First, we are less than one year from a Presidential election. In 389 days we'll have another Presidential inauguration, whether of Obama again or someone else; Newt Gingrich currently leads GOP polls. It is absolutely irresponsible for Gude to assert that the codification of authority that Obama will sign into law doesn't raise the specter of how other Presidents will use that authority.

Yes, a future president may interpret that authority differently, but that is both a fight for another day and one that will not hinge on the 2012 NDAA. So let's put away both the rhetoric and the fear that the U.S. military will be detaining U.S. citizens captured in the United States.

I can only take this irresponsible claim to mean that it is a core part of Obama's re-elect strategy to make sure a President who doesn't embrace indefinite military detention of American

citizens—as Newt would likely do—gets re-elected.

And Obama's [signing statement](#) effectively reiterated this approach: Sure, the NDAA gives Presidents the authority to indefinitely detain citizens, but his Administration will chose not to do so.

Moreover, I want to clarify that my Administration will not authorize the indefinite military detention without trial of American citizens. Indeed, I believe that doing so would break with our most important traditions and values as a Nation. [my emphasis]

The only protection we have against the full force of the NDAA to indefinitely detain citizens, you see, is Obama's continued service as President. We need him, in spite of all the other civil liberties abuses, or Mitt will throw us in military detention forever.

What is at stake with respect to civil liberties, Mr. President?