



McCain-Cruz Clash Highlights Problems With NDAA

It is well known that Senator John McCain, an Arizona Republican, and Senator Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, are not the closest of friends — in fact, McCain once called Cruz and fellow Senator Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, a couple of “wacko birds.”

The latest public conflict between McCain and Cruz occurred during a Senate debate over whether women should be subjected to registering for the draft. The United States has not had a draft since 1973, but Congress reinstated registering for the draft at the urging of President Jimmy Carter.



It appears that language codifying the registration of young women for the draft was slipped into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the annual appropriations bill for funding America’s armed forces. And Cruz did not like it, stating in debate on the floor of the U.S.Senate,

This NDAA for the first time ever would subject women to Selective Service and potentially the draft. It is a radical change that is attempting to be foisted on the American people. The idea that we should forcibly conscript young girls into combat in my mind makes little or no sense, and it is, at minimum a radical proposition. I could not vote for a bill that did so, particularly a bill that did so without public debate.

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McCain took offense to Cruz’s opposition to the NDAA bill, telling the Senate,

The fact is, that every single military leader in this country, both men and women, members of the military, uniformed leadership of this country, believe it is simply fair, since we have opened up all aspects of the military to women, that they also be registering for Selective Service.

McCain then proceeded to launch a personal attack upon Cruz, saying, “The senator from Texas is entitled to his views. Too bad that view is not shared by our military leadership, the ones who have had the experience in the military in combat with women.”

Of course McCain did not add that “our military leadership” is expected to take orders from Commander-in-chief Barack Obama, who has made it abundantly clear that he wants women included in draft registration requirements, the same as young men. Taking a public stance in opposition to Obama’s view (or that of any other president) is just not something that is tolerated by the top military brass. So when McCain says, “Every uniformed leader of the United States military seemed to have a different opinion from the senator from Texas, whose military background is not extensive,” it should be well understood that for a general or admiral to publicly articulate opposition to a president’s stated policy is not a career-enhancer.

McCain, of course, is just as aware of this as anyone else, having had a long career in the Navy, including spending several years as a POW in Vietnam. Even he recently referred to General Martin



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on June 8, 2016

Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as “an echo chamber of the Obama administration.” And retired Colonel Steve Russell, now a member of Congress from Oklahoma, recently questioned whether women candidates at the Army Ranger school had actually performed well enough to pass the rigorous course. When he asked for their records, he was told that they no longer existed. In addition, officials were offended that he would even imply that the women were given any special preference. When this writer asked another retired Army colonel about this episode, he replied that he had no doubt that the word came down from the White House that those women would pass the course — regardless.

Another senator who opposed the inclusion of language requiring young women to register for the draft was Mike Lee of Utah, who called the provision “misguided and ill-advised.” Lee opposed other parts of the bill as well, including the authorization, he wrote, of the “continuation of the Syria Train and Equip program, which was suspended last year after expending hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer money to train only four or five fighters and finance the purchase of weapons that were ultimately seized by Al Nusra, the Syrian Al Qaeda affiliate.” He stated, “I firmly believe that the American counter-ISIS strategy must be reconsidered from the top down.”

McCain castigated Cruz for insisting on getting his way. “The senator from Texas has just made a moving commentary. I would hope he would consider in the future voting for the defense authorization bill rather than voting against it. He voted against it last year as well.” McCain charged that Cruz has a “unique capability” to pick out a single provision in a complex bill and then take a “strong moral stand.”

Cruz retorted, “I would be thrilled to vote yes if we focused on the vital responsibilities of protecting this country rather than focusing on extraneous issues.” In other words, it is clear that Cruz, Lee, Rand Paul, and others do not vote against the NDAA simply because they are against national defense. As Cruz said, “The NDAA shouldn’t be a vehicle to further an agenda that has nothing to do with actually defending America.”

For example, the NDAA would also establish an independent National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service. This commission would be tasked to “consider how to foster a sense of service and civic responsibility among the nation’s youth, improve military recruiting, and increase the pool of qualified applicants for military service and their propensity to serve.” While this provision may sound non-controversial, McCain has long been a proponent of such government agencies as Americorps and other “public service” programs. Among such Big Government Republicans as McCain and those Democrats to whom he “reaches across the aisle” to grow government, it is common enough to hear how young people need to be involved in some sort of “public service,” either military or of the Americorps type.

Another reason that some members of Congress, *such* as Cruz and Lee, have opposed the NDAA in the past is because of its provisions authorizing the president to detain American citizens indefinitely without being given a trial — or even being charged with a crime. McCain expressed impatience that last year Cruz cited concerns over a provision involving indefinite detention in voting against the annual defense bill. Though McCain first had an opportunity to amend the NDAA in 2011 to prohibit this from happening, he voted no, and has consistently supported indefinite detention since then.

So, does McCain believe that opposition to giving such drastic power to the president of the United States (in clear violation of the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution) is the same as being against our national defense?

McCain has a mere 63 percent score on the Freedom Index of *The New American* (a congressional



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scorecard based on the U.S. Constitution that rates congressmen according to their adherence to constitutional principles of limited government, fiscal responsibility, national sovereignty, and a traditional foreign policy of avoiding foreign entanglements). Cruz has an 89-percent score; Lee comes in at 91 percent; and the score for Paul is 93 percent (making him the highest-ranked member of the Senate).

McCain's pathetic record has led Rand Paul's father, former Congressman Ron Paul, to publicly endorse McCain's Republican primary opponent in Arizona, Dr. Kelli Ward. For her part, Ward described the elder Paul as the "gold standard of conservative leadership," and vowed to "take up the torch of liberty and fight tirelessly alongside Sens. Rand Paul, Mike Lee, and Ted Cruz for limited, constitutional government, low taxes, free markets, and a return to honest money."

A recent Rasmussen Reports poll indicates that the country is divided over the issue of requiring women to register for the draft, with 49 percent in favor, and 44 percent in opposition. Perhaps the best solution to this issue comes from a comment made by the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Representative Mac Thornberry, a Texas Republican, who believes the time has come to look at the draft itself: "The big issue is we ought to study whether we need Selective Service," Thornberry stated.

If the Selective Service itself were abolished, then no one — young men or young women — would be required to register at all.

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