



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 8, 2018

On TV Program, Rand Paul Discusses Attack, Health Insurance, and Section 702 of FISA

Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) appeared on the CBS News program *Face the Nation* on January 7, his first such appearance on a Sunday morning show since he was attacked from behind by his neighbor in Bowling Green, Kentucky, on November 3. The violent assault broke six of Paul's ribs and damaged his lungs, twice resulting in pneumonia.



While most news headlines about Paul's appearance spotlighted his statement that recovering from his injuries was "a living hell," only the transcript of the interview noted his comments on other topics, including Trump's plan to allow individuals to buy health insurance across state lines; and section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which allows the federal government to compel American companies to assist in the warrantless surveillance of foreigners.

In talking about his long recovery from his physical injuries, Paul said:

It was sort of I guess a living hell for the first four or five weeks. Couldn't get out of bed without assistance, six broken ribs, damage to my lungs, two bouts of pneumonia. It was really a tough go of it. But each day I feel a little bit better. This last month I've been doing better.

The program's host, John Dickerson, noted that "things have gotten a little bit uglier" and asked Paul if he thought that was a part of what happened as a motivation for the assault, and whether the senator talked about that with his colleagues. Paul responded:

My colleagues come up all the time, and they want to make sure that there is some kind of deterrent because people don't want to think that it's open season on our elected officials. I was also at the baseball field when we were shot at with semi-automatic fire, and Steve Scalise was severely wounded, and I was ten feet from a young staffer who was shot in the leg.

Paul was referring to the June 14, 2017 shooting in Alexandria, Virginia, when James Hodgkinson of Belleville, Illinois, a left-wing activist, opened fire on a group of congressmen who were practicing for the annual Congressional Baseball Game for Charity. Among those shot were House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La); Crystal Griner, a U.S. Capitol Police officer assigned to protect Scalise; Zack Barth, a congressional aide; and Matt Mika, a Tyson Foods lobbyist. Officers shot Hodgkinson, who died from his wounds at George Washington University Hospital.



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Paul continued by saying that he did not want to focus excessively on motivations, however:

I think one of the things about motivations is people got obsessed, some in the media, about the motivations. But I think really we usually don't ask if someone's raped or mugged or whatever why the person did it. We want punishment and deterrents. And I guess that's what I'm mostly about. I just don't think of any kind of motivation or justification, whether it's political or personal, to attack someone who's unaware from behind in their own yard.

The motives of Paul's neighbor for the attack have never been fully made public. Like Paul, who is an ophthalmologist, his neighbor, Rene Boucher, is also a medical doctor, a retired anesthesiologist. Although Boucher has been described as politically liberal, there is no indication that the attack was politically motivated. His lawyer, Matthew J. Baker, told the *Washington Post* that the "trivial" dispute behind the assault was about trees, grass, and other landscaping. "It all stems from maintenance, or lack of it, at these two neighboring properties."

Baker maintains that the attack was "unequivocally not about politics."

Whatever his motivations, the manner of the attack certainly suggests that Boucher is mentally unstable, given that this was not a shoving match or fistfight that escalated, but a one-sided assault.

Paul also provided Dickerson with what he said was just one example of Trump's great insight and ability to do things that ordinary politicians don't do.

The senator said he proposed to Trump the idea of letting individuals join together to buy health insurance across state lines. Paul noted:

Every politician, Republican, and bureaucrat in Washington, said we couldn't do it, and they hadn't done it in 30 years. He looked at the original law, he told his lawyers, "Look at the original law and see if the interpretation of these previous government attorneys have been correct."

And he had the wherewithal just to say: "No. We're going to let individuals join these groups so they can get cheaper insurance and perhaps better insurance as well and perhaps get insurance for people who don't have insurance." But he did that because he's different than any other politician.

Despite the above approval of some of Trump's policies, Paul is no party-line supporter of the administration. He is adamantly opposed to the position being promoted by the administration and national security hawks in Congress who favor a permanent reauthorization of Section 702 of the 2012 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). As noted above, this law allows the federal government to compel American companies to assist in the warrantless surveillance of foreigners.

Dickerson asked Paul about why he has held up Trump's nomination of John Demers to become assistant attorney general of the National Security Division and is also talking about filibustering the nomination. Paul replied:

702 is supposed to get information on foreigners. And so, we have a lower-than-constitutional standard. We say, "Well, the Constitution doesn't apply to people in other countries." And I agree with that. So, we collect a massive amount of information on foreigners.

But they talk to Americans. So, after you gather millions and billions of bits of information, it turns out there's a lot of Americans in the database. What we don't want to happen is that domestic law enforcement, police and F.B.I. are looking in a database that was collected without constitutional protections.



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When Dickerson asked Paul what he intended to do about the proposed reauthorization, he said:

Well, we'll try to stop them. The people on the other side, the C.I.A. director and others, they want permanent reauthorization, no reform. And when you ask them, "Are you using this for domestic crime?" They kind of say, "Well, we don't do it very often." But they won't tell you where they're sort of looking at the information and then not presenting it in court but using that information to develop what's called parallel construction to develop cases.

They want just permanent reauthorization, which to me means no more oversight by Congress. The reason we need more oversight is that people, as Madison said, "Men are not angels." And we've seen recently how we've had some people in the F.B.I. that had bias against the president.

Those who value the freedoms and privacy protected by the Bill of Rights will be glad that Paul is following in the footsteps of his father, former Representative Ron Paul, in insisting on constitutional protections.

Image: [Screenshot from Face the Nation interview](#)

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