



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on February 20, 2014

Ron Paul Promotes Clemency Petition for Edward Snowden

In a video published last week, Ron Paul announced his sponsorship of [a petition to bring Edward Snowden home](#). The website of the former congressman and libertarian icon states:

Edward Snowden shocked the world when he exposed the NSA's illegal and abusive spying program. Instead of applauding him for his bravery and patriotism, the U.S. government labels Snowden a traitor.



Join Ron Paul in demanding that Edward Snowden IS granted clemency. Sign the Petition. Let's bring Edward home before his amnesty in Russia expires on July 31, 2014.

In June 2013, the Obama administration charged Snowden with espionage.

According to the criminal complaint filed by the federal government against Snowden in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, the former NSA networking subcontractor will be charged with theft, "unauthorized communication of national defense information," and "willful communication of classified communications intelligence information to an unauthorized person."

The last two counts are violations of the Espionage Act of 1917.

The *Washington Post* story on the filing of the espionage charges against Snowden reports that the district court was chosen by the Justice Department because Snowden's former employer, Booz Allen Hamilton, is headquartered within that jurisdiction and it is "a district with a long track record of prosecuting cases with national security implications."

With the formal filing of the charges against him, Snowden becomes the eighth person to be charged under the Espionage Act by the Obama administration.

In recent days, however, a statement by Attorney General Eric Holder seemed to soften the Obama administration's hardline.

"If Mr. Snowden wanted to come back to the United States and enter a plea, we would engage with his lawyers. We'd do that with any defendant who wanted to enter a plea of guilty," [Holder said in January](#) during a speech at the University of Virginia.

"We've always indicated ... that the notion of clemency was not something we were willing to consider," Holder added.

There's the rub, apparently, as far as Ron Paul is concerned. Paul seems to sense that once Snowden sets foot in the United States, all bets will be off. He thinks Snowden deserves better than that.

In the video announcing the petition, Paul says,

On June 5th, 2013, Edward Snowden sacrificed his livelihood, citizenship, and freedom by exposing the disturbing scope of the NSA's worldwide spying program. Thanks to one man's courageous actions, Americans know about the truly egregious ways their government is spying on them. By



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signing this petition, you are telling the US government that Mr. Snowden deserves the right to come home without the fear of persecution or imprisonment.

Since August 1, Snowden has been living in Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin permitted Snowden to take up temporary residence in Russia. While certainly not the place to find freedom, it beats being charged with espionage.

Such accusations are curious given that even the president admits there is no evidence that Snowden transferred any sensitive information to a foreign government, an essential element of the crime he is accused of committing. No matter. President Obama is not known for bending his will to the Constitution or to the law.

The cache of documents Snowden holds was leaked to the *Washington Post* and to *The Guardian* (U.K.) and contains compelling evidence of the NSA's wholesale violation of the Fourth Amendment through the dragnet surveillance of phone records and monitoring of Internet traffic.

With the assistance of Glen Greenwald of *The Guardian*, Snowden has leaked one constitutional violation after another committed by the NSA. All of which, it must be understood, was done with the cooperation of the president, the Congress, and the courts. The strength of the evidence of collusion among the three branches of the federal government in the de facto repeal of the Fourth Amendment is overwhelming.

Although Ron's son Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) has certainly followed his father's lead in opposing the NSA's trampling of the liberties protected by the Fourth Amendment, he has not as yet echoed his call for clemency.

"I don't think Edward Snowden deserves the death penalty or life in prison. I think that's inappropriate. And I think that's what he faced," Senator Paul during an appearance on *Meet the Press* in January. "I think the only way he's coming home is if someone would offer him a fair trial with a reasonable sentence."

Snowden apparently believes he would not receive a fair trial with a reasonable sentence, though. He has reason to doubt. There have been at least four American citizens executed on orders of President Obama, not one of whom received so much as a formal list of charges, let alone an impartial hearing on those charges before being killed by a drone-launched Hellfire missile.

Ron Paul, as he always has, is promoting the Constitution and its guarantees of due process. Paul's not alone.

There is a salient question that the president would likely laugh at were it to be posed to him: Where is the constitutional authority for creating and issuing kill orders?

The presidential presumption of guilt by association followed by the autocratic order of a lethal drone strike rightly worries many constitutionalists and friends of liberty. In fact, many questions prompted by the president's drone program remain unanswered. For instance, why can't these alleged "terrorists" be tried in our federal court system? For decades those accused of terroristic crimes have been formally charged with those crimes, had those charges heard before an impartial federal judge, and been permitted to mount a defense to those crimes.

If Snowden were ever to leave Russia, seeking asylum in a less imposing locale, targeting him for death by drone is not as far-fetched as it may seem.



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Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-Ohio) called Snowden a [“traitor.”](#) Senator Dianne Feinstein (R-Calif.) said the 29-year-old whistleblower is [guilty of “treason.”](#) And, inveterate warmonger Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) [tweeted](#), “I view Mr. Snowden’s actions not as one of patriotism but potentially a felony,” adding, “I hope we follow Mr. Snowden to the ends of the earth to bring him to justice.”

During a telephone interview for Fox Business Network’s *Money with Melissa Francis* program, Paul, speaking of Snowden, wondered what the future might hold for the young former NSA contractor.

“I’m worried about somebody in our government who might kill him, with a cruise missile or a drone missile,” Paul said.

“We live in a bad time where American citizens don’t even have rights and that they can be killed,” Paul continued. “But the gentleman is trying to tell the truth about what’s going on. He is not defecting; there’s no sign of that happening. It’s a shame we’re in an age where people who tell the truth about what the government is doing get into trouble.”

Later in the conversation, Paul said he is “absolutely” sure that Snowden has no intention of selling more U.S. secrets to a foreign government, as some have feared. “I don’t think for a minute that he is a traitor,” Paul said.

Shocker: Ron Paul has a different take on civil liberties than the gang of usual suspects quoted above.

When pushed about whether Snowden is a hero or a traitor, Paul blasted the neo-cons with both barrels:

Everybody is worried about him and what they’re going to do and how they will convict him of treason and how they’re going to kill him, but what about the people who destroy our Constitution? What kind of penalty ... [should] those individuals who take the Second or the Fourth Amendment and destroy it [receive]? What do we think about people who assassinate American citizens without trials and assume that’s the law of the land? That’s where our problem is.

When *FBN*’s Francis confronted Paul with the results of a recent Pew Research Center survey that show 56 percent of Americans say the National Security Agency’s (NSA) program tracking the telephone records of millions of Americans is an acceptable way for the government to investigate terrorism, Paul chalked such responses up to “propaganda” of the sort that says, “If you’re not for NSA spying on people, then you’re un-American, you’re unpatriotic, you hate America.”

Interestingly, Paul’s admiration for Snowden is apparently mutual.

In 2012, Snowden [donated \\$500 to the Ron Paul presidential campaign](#).

There is no word on how many people have signed on to Ron Paul’s Snowden clemency petition, and the White House has had no comment.

Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images

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