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Congressional Challenger Simpson faults Military Commissions Act

Independent Democratic congressional candidate Ms. Samm Simpson today called on her opponent C. W. Bill Young to repudiate his vote for the USA Military Commissions Act, calling the Act a blot on American ideals. "Future generations will look back on this legislation with the same abhorrence that Americans have felt every time this nation acts out of fear instead of principle," said Simpson.

The Act, signed by President Bush Oct. 17, strips the right of enemy combatants to habeas corpus (the constitutional and common law right of detainees to challenge their detention in a timely manner) and gives the president the power to arrest, interrogate, although with a ban on harsh treatment, try and imprison indefinitely in secret prisons anyone -- U.S. citizens included, here or abroad -- he deems to have provided material support for hostile activities.

The District 10 challenger pointed out that under the Act, prisoners have no recourse to appeal, no right to cross examine witnesses and no access to evidence against themselves. The president has the sole authority to define "enemy combatant," "harsh treatment," "material support" and "hostile action." Furthermore, the Act allows the president to determine the meaning and application of the Geneva Conventions and strips the courts of jurisdiction to hear challenges to his interpretation.

Habeas Corpus, which means produce the body (of evidence), has been a tenet of English common law since the time of the Magna Carta in the 1200s, and was considered important enough to be specifically mentioned in Article One, Section nine of the Constitution which reads, "The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it."

Simpson recalled that in every instance when previous presidents ignored constitutional guarantees, they were soundly rebuked by the courts and the voters. She listed John Adam's Alien and Sedition Acts intended to silence his critics; Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus resulting in 13,000 arbitrary arrests; Wilson's Espionage and Sedition Acts that imprisoned critics of the government and the war effort and banned numerous mainstream publications; and Roosevelt's internment of over 110,000 Japanese citizens. Ironically, only ten individuals were convicted of spying for Japan, and all were Caucasian.

Simpson pointed out the large number of improper detentions and illegal renderings that have already taken place and the hundreds of innocent people who have found themselves on the nation's no-fly list because of similar names. "Are we really ready to trust this administration, with its record of intelligence failures, bureaucratic blunders and operational incompetence, with a free hand to imprison someone and throw away the key?"

Dunedin resident and independent Democrat, Ms. Samm Simpson qualified in May 2006 with over 4,000 voter signed petitions as a candidate for Congress in Florida's 10th Congressional District. Voters now have a clear choice between candidates in November as Simpson's run for public office is fueled by a deep concern about the expansion of Presidential powers and Constitutional rule of law, the expanding federal deficit, the need to transform our energy policy and change our course in Iraq.

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