Dear Senator Bill Cassidy,

Benjamin Franklin once said, “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” In light of the drone attacks on Anwar al-Awlaki and his 16-year-old son, the debate of liberty versus security has once again been brought to the center of American forethought. Our security and liberty are not in balance. Therefore, to maintain our American values, I am asking you to support an investigation regarding the legality of the president’s decision.

The Obama administration claimed that al-Awlaki presented an imminent danger to U.S. national security and therefore was an “enemy combatant” who could be treated as a threat just as any other soldier on a battlefield. However, as a United States citizen, we are all given equal unalienable rights that cannot be denied. One of these rights is the right to due process and trial by jury. The overall decision to determine someone’s guilt should be based on a trial where the defense and prosecution both present their cases and an unbiased jury is to evaluate and give a fair judgement. In this case, Obama illegally acted as the judge, jury, and executioner. The President simply does not have the authority under our Constitution to create a program that gives him the secret, unchecked power to designate citizens for death. By allowing his opinion to override our judicial system, al-Awlaki’s liberty was violated and his life was unjustly ended.

Al-Awlaki’s liberty was our liberty. If we don’t stand for the liberty of one U.S. citizen, how do we stand for the liberty of the rest of them? If the U.S. government can violate one U.S. citizen’s liberty with no consequences, then what’s to say they will not violate anyone’s liberty? Denying this man of his liberty in pursuit of national security decreases the security of our citizens from our own government. If we allow the President to violate some individuals’ constitutional rights unopposed, then everyone’s constitutional rights are at risk. We must hold the government accountable to the Constitution and morality to protect an individual's’ rights against government abuse of power.

In the case of al-Awlaki, the U.S. government unlawfully denied him of his life and liberty, which are two of the fundamental pillars that our nation is built on. Although a strong national security is vital, the deaths of al-Awlaki and his son were both unconstitutional and highly destructive of liberty. To maintain a proper relationship between security and liberty, I am asking you to call for an investigation regarding the legality of the president’s decision. Killing al-Awlaki was a mistake and the consequences of such mistakes are far greater when the end result is death; there’s no recourse for an unjust killing.

Sincerely,

Anonymous