Dear Senator Vitter,

In 2011 President Obama ordered and the Central Intelligence Agency carried out a drone strike on Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. Citizen. This killing was rationalized by the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), a bill signed in September of 2001 which allows the United States to use force against those behind the September 11 attacks. Although al-Awlaki fit this category, he was a U.S citizen and should have been protected by his constitutional rights. The murder of this man was unconstitutional and changes must be made to our laws so that this atrocity does not happen again.

The Fifth Amendment guarantees the right of trial by jury for capital crimes to all U.S. citizens who are not in the U.S. Military. Al-Awlaki did not enjoy this right. According to Attorney General Eric Holder, extraction of al-Awlaki, which would be necessary for a trial to be held, was not a viable option. However, this inability to legally prosecute does not excuse a violation of the Bill of Rights. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Those who surrender freedom for security will not have, nor do they deserve, either one." The entire purpose of securing our nation against the threat of terror is to preserve our liberties, and the constitutional restrictions on our government and military are the difference between us and the terrorists we are fighting. For the U.S. Government to violate our constitutional liberties in the hope of eliminating an enemy of the people is to declare itself, the U.S. Government, an enemy of the people.

Anwar al-Awlaki should not have been murdered, but the perpetrators, President Obama and the CIA, were in compliance with the current laws concerning the killing of terrorists. The UAMF gives the President the power to order assassination to deter terrorism. However, the bill neither specifies that this power must be used against foreign persons nor preserves the right of trial by jury for domestic persons. The implications of this clear violation of the Constitution, despite its good intentions, make it not only illegal but immoral. It has not only been cited as justification for assassinations, but has also been used for unrelated and immoral purposes such as the NSA's defense of their Terrorist Surveillance Program in the case of ACLU v. NSA.

The slaughter of Anwar al-Awlaki was an illegal act carried out on the authority of an unconstitutional law. Al-Awlaki did not receive the basic rights guaranteed to all citizens of the United States despite their despicable deeds. It would not have been possible without a law which is a greater menace to the American People than any terrorist. These failings by the U.S. Government are unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. The 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force must be either revoked or altered so that no more American Citizens can be stripped of their inherent rights.

Sincerely,

Concerned Citizens