



October 4, 2007

Steve Fox  
Campaign Manager  
American Freedom Campaign  
1320 18th Street NW, Fifth Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Fox:

Thank you for your letter and for the opportunity to convey directly my views on these issues of great importance to our Nation.

I believe the most important strength of our country emanates from our values and our institutions of justice, as enshrined in our Constitution. Our values and institutions are not liabilities, as this administration wants Americans to believe. To the contrary, I believe our values – our belief in human dignity, the rule of law, and fundamental fairness – are our most important assets, and forfeiting them in the war against terrorism and extremism hands a victory to the enemy.

As we read today in The New York Times, however, the administration has continued to try to evade the law while claiming to abide by it, commissioning secret memos that turn the laws against torture and cruel treatment on their heads.

When I opposed the Military Commissions Act in 2006, I made my position clear: torture violates the fundamental rule of law and the institutions of justice, it does not bear reliable fruit in intelligence gathering, and it undermines our moral strength in a conflict that cannot be won solely with military might. It should never be the policy of the United States to torture.

My position has been reinforced and strengthened in recent months by a number of important events. In a December 2006 report commissioned by the Defense Intelligence Agency, a number of leading experts offered evidence that challenged the reliability of information obtained from coercive interrogation tactics.

In April 2007, I met personally with a group of retired Generals and Admirals, seasoned and experienced military officers with many years of experience among them, and they were unequivocal in their view that torture and other official cruelty have no place in U.S. policy. They also said that permitting torture does “grave damage to America’s moral authority and, by fueling jihadist recruitment, undermines our security.”

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As I said in September, I could not agree more. Torture "cannot be American policy. Period."

Similarly, we must uphold the most basic right of all people detained under government authority to challenge the reason for their detention. Our democracy is grounded in the conviction that courts must be able to check the arbitrary power of government over the individual. Denying habeas corpus to detainees in our custody undermines that principle and in doing so diminishes us all.

I also believe that the President must have the ability to pursue terrorists and defend our national security with the best technology at hand. But we have existing law that allows that -- the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The rule of law is not an obstacle, despite what some in the Executive Branch seem to believe. In fact, the rule of law facilitates our safety and security. That is why I voted against the President's wiretapping bill this past August.

To lead, our country must uphold its most fundamental rules and standards. The next president must not only possess a clear-eyed assessment of the terrorist threat, but must demonstrate the moral courage to face that threat without forsaking the values which set our Nation apart. I look forward to taking up that challenge as President.

Thank you for your important work on these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hillary". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hillary Rodham Clinton