

End Urged To Terror Suspects' Indefinite Detention

BY DONNA CASSATA
Associated Press



Smith

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of House lawmakers is challenging a new law that allows the indefinite detention without trial of suspected terrorists, even U.S. citizens seized within the United States.

Their effort comes as a federal court in New York on Wednesday struck down as unconstitutional a portion of the law that gives the government broad powers to regulate the detention, interrogation and prosecution of suspected terrorists.

An unusual coalition of Democrats, libertarians and tea partiers on Wednesday unveiled an amendment to the 2013 defense budget that would end the indefinite detention. The House was scheduled to begin debate on the overall defense spending blueprint late Wednesday and probably will consider the amendment Thursday.

"The president does not need this authority to keep us safe," Rep. Adam Smith of Washington state, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, told reporters.

Last year, Congress passed a far-reaching defense bill that includes a provision denying suspected terrorists, including U.S. citizens seized within the nation's borders, the right to trial and subjects them to the possibility they would be held indefinitely. It reaffirms the post-Sept. 11 authorization for the use of

military force that allows indefinite detention of enemy combatants.

In the months since, however, members of Congress have faced a backlash over the detention language.

Conservatives fear that it could result in unfettered power for the federal government, allowing it to detain American citizens indefinitely for even a one-time contribution to a humanitarian group that's later linked to terrorism. They argue that would be a violation of long-held constitutional rights. Several Democrats also have criticized the provision as an example of government overreach and an unnecessary obstacle to the Obama administration's war against terrorism, creating the unique political coalition of opponents.

Joining Smith at a Capitol Hill news conference was freshman Rep. Justin Amash, R-Mich., Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, a GOP presidential candidate, and Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif.

"I do not believe a republic can exist if you permit a military to arrest American citizens and put them in secret prisons and deny a trial," Paul said.

The amendment would bar indefinite detention without charge or trial and roll back the military custody requirement. The group has the backing of 40 retired generals and admirals who wrote in a letter that "sound national

security policy depends on faithful adherence to the rule of law."

Smith said the amendment had a "reasonable chance of passage."

In New York, U.S. District Judge Katherine Forrest in Manhattan said in a ruling in a case brought by journalists, scholars and others that "an individual could run the risk of substantially supporting or directly supporting an associated force without even being aware that he or she was doing so."

Proponents of the detention provision argue that it is a necessary tool in the fight against terrorism. In a letter to House colleagues, Reps. Howard "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Lamar Smith, R-Texas, head of the Judiciary Committee, urged members to oppose the amendment and defended the law.

"No one could possibly favor the unlawful detention of American citizens, least of all the Armed Services and Judiciary committees," the two wrote. They argued that the law does not sanction the unlawful detention of American citizens and the goal of the defense bill is to "reinforce the protection of American citizens from terrorist attacks."

The White House has threatened a veto of the Armed Services Committee's defense bill, arguing that the \$642 billion measure adds billions of dollars to Obama's request and limits the military's ability to execute a new defense strategy.

Skechers To Pay \$40M To Settle Gov. Charges

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government wants you to know that simply sporting a pair of Skechers' fitness shoes is not going to get you Kim Kardashian's curves or Brooke Burke's toned tush.

Skechers USA Inc. will pay \$40 million to settle charges by the Federal Trade Commission that the footwear company made unfounded claims that its Shape-ups shoes would help people lose weight and strengthen their butt, leg and stomach muscles. Kardashian, Burke and other celebrities endorsed the shoes in Skechers ads.

Wednesday's settlement also involves the company's Resistance Runner, Toners, and Tone-ups shoes and claims of deceptive advertising for those shoes as well.

Consumers who bought the shoes would be eligible for refunds, though it's not clear how much money they'll get. The FTC says that will depend on how many claims are received in the eight-month filing period. Buyers can go to the FTC website to file a claim.

Most of the \$40 million federal settlement would be returned to consumers, but a small amount of the settlement would be used to administer the payouts.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Wife, Mary, Found Dead

BEDFORD, N.Y. (AP) — Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s estranged wife, Mary Richardson Kennedy, who had fought drug and alcohol problems, was found dead in her home Wednesday.

An autopsy for the 52-year-old was scheduled for Thursday, and no cause of death had been released.

In a statement issued by Robert Kennedy Jr.'s chief of staff, the family described Mary Kennedy as "a genius at friendship."

"Mary inspired our family with her kindness, her love, her gentle soul and generous spirit," the family said.

The former Mary Richardson, a longtime connection of the Kennedy clan, married Robert Kennedy Jr., a prominent environmental lawyer and the son of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and nephew of President John F. Kennedy, in 1994. The couple had four children, the youngest born in July 2001. Robert Kennedy Jr. also has two children from a previous marriage.

T.B. Patient Charged For Refusing Medication

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Authorities in California took the unusual step of jailing and charging a tuberculosis patient who they say refused to take medication to keep his disease from becoming contagious.

Health officials said Armando Rodriguez, 34, of Stockton has active pulmonary tuberculosis, which can include coughing up blood or phlegm and can spread through the air.

Rodriguez has been noncompliant with his treatment and could become contagious as a result, Ginger Wick, nursing director for San Joaquin County, said in a letter requesting a warrant for Rodriguez's arrest.

After failing one time to give himself the drugs, Rodriguez told a nurse he had gone on an alcohol binge and taken methamphetamine and didn't want to hurt his liver, Wick said in her letter.

Rodriguez was arrested Tuesday and is expected to be arraigned Thursday on two misdemeanor counts of refusing to comply with a tuberculosis order to be at home at certain times and make appointments to take his medication.

4-Day

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week, according to the state Department of Education (DOE). The state DOE website lists 15 schools with the shorter week in fiscal year 2009, climbing to 22 districts in fiscal year 2010, 31 districts in fiscal year 2011 and 38 districts in fiscal years 2012 and 2013.

MAKING THE MOVE

In considering the switch, Irene-Wakonda officials contacted other districts that had already adopted the shorter week.

"I talked with (superintendents) Bryce Knudson over at Bon Homme and Dean Christensen at the Deuel school in Clear Lake," Johnke said. "I asked questions about how it was going and how they did certain things."

Johnke also talked to schools that had adopted a modified calendar besides the four-day week.

Irene-Wakonda officials weren't wading into totally unfamiliar waters, Johnke said. Years earlier, before consolidation of the two districts, Irene had considered a four-day week.

"We had done a lot of research seven years ago, when Irene was looking at going to a four-day week because it was in a bit of a financial crisis. We had done a survey with all the patrons," he said. "But we were sharing a lot of staff with Wakonda, and they weren't interested, so we shelved (the idea). When we considered it again (last year), we already had some of the background."

Once committed to the change, Irene-Wakonda officials selected Friday as the "no school day." But while classes weren't in session, students were still learning.

"We have what we call 'Eagle Friday' (named after the school's mascot). It was basically completely open for students to come in from 8 a.m. to 12 noon for one-on-one or extra help if they missed a test during the week or were sick and needed make-up," he said.

"Several parents commented that it has worked well and has reached a lot of those (students) who needed help. We weren't busying students on those Fridays, so they had to get to school themselves, but there was a lot of participation."

The switch to a four-day week didn't create problems for I-W students taking distance learning classes from Mount Marty College in Yankton and other higher education institutions, Johnke said.

I-W students enjoyed flexibility in taking those classes, he said. If anything, the open Fridays allowed

those students more time for getting assistance from their long-distance instructors, he added.

Irene-Wakonda also didn't run into major problems with parents needing daycare for students on Fridays, Johnke said. "We didn't offer daycare in school, and nobody really made a big complaint about it. Everything worked out," he said.

A LEARNING PROCESS

The four-day week brought some initial concerns about students' ability to learn, Johnke said. However, he said changes have strengthened educational quality.

Because of a longer school day under the four-day week, the amount of classroom time comes out to about the same as a regular five-day week, Johnke said.

To create more instruction time, the district eliminated its 20-minute home room period in the middle of the day — which wasn't accomplishing much academically anyway — and lengthened class times, Johnke said. Adjustments were also made to lunchtime, with students eating in shifts.

The longer class periods work well for subjects that use hands-on learning, such as science labs, Johnke said. Teachers who rely more on lectures are making use of technology and other innovations to take advantage of the additional class time.

The school day runs from about 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m., Johnke said. Rather than start the day earlier, the district decided to run classes later. The decision eased some concerns about putting students on the bus earlier in the morning.

"Actually, they're not on the

bus any longer than years before," he said. "We started at the same time in the morning and put all the (extra) time at the end of the day. Now, students get home a little later (on the bus), and ball practices start about a half-hour later."

The longer school days also raised concerns that younger students might become too tired, but they have adapted to the schedule, Johnke said.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

With no classes on Friday, the Irene-Wakonda district has seen fewer absences because families are waiting for the three-day weekend to take care of personal business rather than take children out of school, Johnke said.

With the longer school days, the district also schedules time for shuttling students and staff between the Irene and Wakonda sites as needed, he said.

Johnke sees the possibility of scheduling more extra-curricular activities on Friday. "In the future, we are looking into playing more basketball doubleheaders on Friday because we can leave earlier in the day without the students missing classes," he said.

In a positive sign for the future, the district didn't find teacher candidates reluctant to work the non-traditional calendar.

"We did have to hire a couple of teachers and got that done this year," he said. "We explained the four-day week (during interviews), and it didn't bother them."

Irene-Wakonda has committed to the four-day week for next year, Johnke said. He predicts, with cuts in state aid and growing budget concerns, that other districts will

consider the move.

"This last year, with the cuts from the governor, it made about 10 or 11 of the districts go to four days," he said. "Whether that (trend) will continue or not, I really don't know, but there will be a few every so often."

Irene-Wakonda adopted the four-day week for financial reasons, but the district found a number of educational benefits along the way, Johnke said. He pointed to improved morale among students and staff.

"We hoped that it would improve the school climate and attendance, and we definitely think that was a plus. A lot of kids seemed to enjoy coming to school who had struggled with it earlier," he said. "The kids we talked to enjoyed it and really liked it, and the teachers really liked it. I think attendance improved overall."

While the four-day week will have its critics, Johnke said the change has benefited his school.

"People in our district were looking for ways to save programs and get the best education we could," he said. "By making some changes, we could all make it work."

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