

"Writing the truth  
as I see it;  
trying not to  
offend  
those who will  
disagree."

# The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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## Let's work together to balance rights, security

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The Sikh gentleman feels violated when asked by a court bailiff in Dallas, Texas, to remove his turban. Is he facing discrimination? Is he being treated any differently than any other person entering the courthouse? Should his faith allow him rights other individuals do not have?

The airline captain removes six Muslim imams. He had been told the imams were overhead saying the words "U.S." and "killing Saddam," and were chanting "Allah, Allah." He was told they were "acting angry." Was the captain's decision ethnically motivated or religiously biased? Were the imams treated unfairly? Were they singled out because of their nationality or faith? Or did the captain simply have to make a very difficult decision? Must the imams turn out to be a threat for his decision to be correct? Would a reasonable person with the same information remove them from the flight?

We are appalled when we learn the government is wiretapping potential terrorists without first petitioning a judge. Is such surveillance actually necessary to preserve our national security or is it big brother creating a police state? Which is more important to us, privacy or security? In these times do we want the government to delay protecting us from a potential threat?

There is a very delicate balance between civil rights and national security. The ultimate in security demands the minimum in privacy while the ultimate in privacy demands the minimum in security. They are at opposing extremes of the same continuum. Are we willing to compromise any privacy for security or any security for privacy? If privacy is more important, can we complain if another 9-11 occurs?

We demand security but with great indignation, we refuse any personal inconvenience. We demand our

government prevent another 9-11 while chastising TSA agents at the airport security checkpoints. We demand the government intercept the terrorists plotting another attack but are appalled if our government is listening in on citizens' private conversations.

Can we expect the man from Texas to remove his cowboy hat for courthouse security but not expect the Sikh gentleman to remove his turban? Can we expect an airline captain to be given information and not act on it when he has only a few minutes to reach a decision? Can we expect our government to only wiretap those lines that produce a proven terrorist? And what would we say if a gun were smuggled into a courtroom in a turban? What if a bomb were smuggled onto an airliner? What if a wiretap could prevent another 9-11? Would we applaud the protection of our civil rights or would we chastise our government for not protecting us?

We need a reality check and an attitude adjustment. Could the Sikh gentleman wearing a turban be expected to politely ask if it would be possible to be searched in a private area and then, if the judge agrees, allowed to wear his turban in the courtroom? Could he thank the bailiff for understanding his beliefs while doing what was necessary to keep the court safe? A simple request for understanding will work far better than unnecessary accusations followed by lawsuits.

Could the captain apologize to the clerics for their embarrassment and inconvenience and could the clerics thank the captain for caring about the safety of the flight? Sometimes acknowledging the other's point of view solves rather than escalates a confrontation.

Are we willing to allow the government to wiretap a person who may be a threat to our country without first presenting evidence to a judge?

Instead of accusing our government of illegal wiretapping, could our leaders compromise, expecting the government to petition a judge within a reasonable period to review the wiretap? Reasonable compromise can solve many disputes.

We must strive for the unobtainable goal of perfect national security while maintaining ideal civil rights. If we meet these new and difficult situations without looking for a problem or confrontation, we will lessen the risk of actually encountering one. We can achieve a balance between an individual's civil rights and the rest of the population's national security rights.

I suggest we take the approach of working towards solutions rather than simply identifying problems. Fixing the blame is easy. Fixing the problem, now that is difficult. Let us not claim racism, religious intolerance, profiling, unnecessary delays, violations of civil rights, etc. whenever we find ourselves inconvenienced. Let us try saying "thank you for caring for our safety and how may I help this go more smoothly?" Let us remove the chips from our shoulders, the hard edge from our personality and the condescending demeanor we humans demonstrate so well. Let's work together on maintaining our civil rights while protecting our national security. We can choose to find that compromise position along the continuum. Remember, maximum security and maximum freedoms are mutually exclusive. We will lose some privacy to enhance our security and we will have less than ideal security to maintain our privacy.

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