

Tuesday, September 18, 2007

Will John Kerry denounce tasing of audience member?

Â In previous blogposts, I have attacked abusive police use of tasers. The attached video, posted September 17 to the Internet and linked at BoingBoing, shows a John Kerry questioner being tased after pontificating and questioning irritatingly -- for Kerry, that is, but if politicians open questions to the floor, they should be prepared to tolerate such questions, and not evict the questioner. Â The video does not answer who decided to evict the questioner in the first place: Kerry (apparently no, but the video seems to show Kerry knew he was being evicted but did nothing to stop or oppose the eviction), his handlers (perhaps, but the video does not say), the police (maybe), or someone else? Do you know? Â Finally, need we hold our breaths to hear Kerry denounce this tasing? Jon Katz.Â ADDENDUM: Here is some follow-up information on this issue (and additional updates are in italics): Â - The tased student is Andrew Meyer. He is being prosecuted for disorderly conduct and resisting the police. Neither appear to be justified. The initial seizure of Mr. Meyer by the police was unjustified, so any resistance by him (which looks mild on the video) should not be a crime. Clearly, he did not act disorderly; he may have been excited and upset by the police seizure, but he cannot be faulted criminally or otherwise for that.Â He seems to have beenÂ ratherÂ obnoxious from the get-go, but obnoxiousness is not a crime. Â Further update: Andrew Meyer's friends have put up more information and videos and links on his case at theandrewmeyer.com. Â - The tasing took place at the University of Florida at a town hall with John Kerry, sponsored by the student government. Â - More videos of and about the tasing are here, here, here,Â here, and here, as well as at theandrewmeyer.com. This is the most comprehensive video, although it views more as a slideshow than as a video. Â - As of 7:00 a.m. on September 18, TalkLeft and DailyKos have been silent on this incident. I do not know how political commentators on the left who blog throughout the day can maintain their credibility if they keep silent on this issue. I'll check back to see if the silence continues. By 11:55 a.m. on September 18, TalkLeft covered this story. By 10:00 a.m. on September 18, and later the same morning, DailyKos covered the story here and hereÂ (with a YouTube video showing Kerry and Bush II confirming their membership in Skull & Bones by confirming they must keep all secret about Skull & Bones. Elected leaders should not have it both ways; either they reveal what Skull & Bones is all about (seeing how exclusive is the organization and how many of its members hold positions of governmental power), or they should not seek elected leadership in the first place, or else voters should not elect them.)Â - I e-mailed Senator Kerry on September 18, asking him publicly to denounce the taser use in this incident. Please join me in contacting him. As DailyKos reports here, and as ABC's blog prints here, Kerry responded as follows; I am still waiting for him to take a real stand: Â "'In 37 years of public appearances, through wars, protests and highly emotional events, I have never had a dialogue end this way,' Kerry said in a statement. 'I believe I could have handled the situation without interruption, but I do not know what warnings or other exchanges transpired between the young man and the police prior to his barging to the front of the line and their intervention. I asked the police to allow me to answer the question and was in the process of responding when he was taken into custody.Â "'I was not aware that a taser was used until after I left the building,' he continued. 'I hope that neither the student nor any of the police were injured. I regret enormously that a good healthy discussion was interrupted.'"

Posted by Jon Katz in Criminal Defense at 00:00