

## 'Truth Commission' critic accuses Leahy of 'whitewash'

03/12/2009 @ 10:07 am

Filed by Rachel Oswald

Passions surrounding various proposals that would investigate Bush administration wrongdoings are extremely high with interested parties not shying away from using harsh rhetoric towards fellow supporters of probes.

Speaking to Raw Story, Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights and a human rights attorney, says he is opposing Senate Judiciary chairman Patrick Leahy's proposed 'Truth Commission' because it doesn't go far enough.



"We're talking about a whitewash with Leahy. Are we some Latin American country where we don't have a democracy robust enough to try people?" Ratner said. "[Leahy's] essentially diffusing the issue so there's not as much pressure on prosecution. It's not really going to go far. [The commission is] going to divert us for a few years and we're never going to see something come out of it."

Ratner said he and the Center for Constitutional Rights want to see criminal prosecutions of officials at the highest level of the Bush administration, the so-called "principals" who were the architects of controversial policies and signed off on them.

"Cheney has openly said that he approved the water boarding memo and that he would do it again," Ratner said, adding, "My view is you absolutely have to have prosecutions to have deterrents [for future executive power abuses]."

Speaking at last Wednesday's [Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on the matter](#), Leahy (D-VT) said, "If criminal conduct occurred, this senator wants to know about it. "I'm trying to get the ability to find out if criminal conduct occurred so it won't happen again. If crimes occurred, I don't think they should be swept under the rug."

Leahy has said he would not rule out criminal prosecutions of high-level Bush appointees as have

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other senators supportive of his proposal, such as Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

Ratner said he objects to comments made by Leahy critical of people who are “fixated on prosecution.”

“That’s me,” Ratner said, adding, “Those [comments] are all basically saying ‘we’re not prosecuting.’”

Ratner said he has been unexpectedly pleased with the public support for criminal prosecutions in the country.

More than 100 organizations large and small have [signed on to calls throughout the years for a special prosecutor](#) to look into Bush administration abuses while at least 18 groups have already [affirmed their support of Leahy’s Truth Commission proposal](#).

Approximately 40 percent of [those polled by Gallup](#) at the end of January support criminal investigations while 25 percent to 30 percent support an investigation by an independent panel. 35 percent to 25 percent of those polled don’t want any investigation at all.