



**ILLINOIS STATE  
BAR ASSOCIATION**

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Editorial Page Editor  
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(Via E-mail)

To the Editor:

According to Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, federal judges "will never be in the best position to know what is in the national security interests of our country" and, therefore, should defer to the will of the president and Congress when deciding national security cases.

This is an astonishing position for our nation's chief lawyer to take. It strikes at the core of what it means to have an independent judiciary as a co-equal branch of government.

Mr. Gonzalez suggests that our courts should take a hands-off approach to such governmental actions as opening citizens' mail without a warrant and examining citizens' bank records under questionable authority. It is a shameful and incredulous suggestion.

Our freedoms are protected by three co-equal branches of government. The checks and balances inherent in that system of government were intended by our nation's founders as a safeguard against the abuse of power by any one branch. This is what distinguishes our government from all others. We must be vigilant to prevent erosion of this basic principle, and to keep the judiciary strong in their constitutional role.

Whether you happen to agree or disagree with the current administration about its national security policies makes no difference. Unchecked power in the hands of the executive branch is a really bad idea. Without an independent judiciary capable of applying the rule of law, we would soon find ourselves subject to the same kind of tyranny that led to the founding of America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irene F. Bahr". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Irene F. Bahr, President  
Illinois State Bar Association