

# “ROBO-SIGNING” THE PATRIOT ACT

Chuck Todd tweeted last night:

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WH announced that POTUS ordered the
Patriot Act renewal to be signed by the
“autopen”; so, yes, it was robo-signed
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Reason given for robo-signing via
autopen: Patriot Act expires midnight
tonight, so as to not have gap, either
robo-signed or flown to him
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Now, Todd was writing in the early hours of morning, French time, while watching hoops (I believe he’s a Heat fan). So this interpretation may be a product of his inattention/fatigue.

Nevertheless, it’s interesting because Todd improperly called signing the PATRIOT Act with an autopen “robo-signing.” They’re not actually the same thing. Robosigning as currently used is when a poorly paid live person signs a name to a document (though maybe not the one whose name gets signed), claiming to attest to the accuracy of documents without actually doing so. By ordering that PATRIOT be signed using his autopen, Obama gave the law the full weight of law, yet without actually signing the document.

As I joked last night, they’re going to have to add a couple of lines to Schoolhouse Rock to explain to children the magic of the President’s autopen:

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I’m just a bill, yes I’m only a bill,
thanks to the President losing his auto-
quill.
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I’m off to the White House to wait in a
line for the President’s autosign.
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So Todd was somewhat inaccurate in calling this robo-signing. But in a funny way that accorded the PATRIOT signing the same illegitimacy and

fraud of foreclosure fraud.

That said, Todd then parroted the Administration fib about why “robosigning” was necessary: because the PATRIOT authorities extended yesterday expired at midnight, so the only way to get the bill signed into law was with Obama’s autopen (or a whole lot of wasted jet fuel, and even that wouldn’t have worked in time).

But that’s not right. Because it ignores the way Congress did nothing with the PATRIOT extensions in the existing extension period, the way those defending the status quo preferred letting time run out to a real debate on these authorities, the way a long-term extension was rammed through at the last moment.

The way to avoid the fraudulent appearance of auto-signing the PATRIOT act, of course, would have been to have an actual debate about it. But Harry Reid and John Boehner and Obama and the other defenders of the status quo couldn’t have that!

Update: Apparently it’s okay to “robo-sign” bills into law because Steven Bradbury said it was:

WH says “auto pen” use authorized by Office of Legal Counsel finding in 2005. Obama phoned auto pen OK to staff secretary last night.