

THE DANGER OF SOMEONE CRITICIZING POLITICAL PORK LANDING ON THE CAPITOL LAWN

The WaPo has a good review of how postal service worker Doug Hughes managed to fly his gyrocopter onto the Capitol lawn without being spotted by the Secret Service or other security forces.

But the best part of the story cites corporate sucklings Chuck Schumer and Ron Johnson expressing dismay that the security theater draping DC didn't prevent Hughes from landing a harmless aircraft on their lawn.

On Capitol Hill, there was less concern Thursday about Hughes's message than how he delivered it – flying into the heart of the nation's capital and alighting on the Capitol lawn about 1:30 p.m. in what amounts to an airborne go-cart, powered by something like a lawn mower engine, and kept aloft by an overhead rotor and a small propeller.

“How did it happen?” Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) wondered aloud. “How did the helicopter get through? Why weren't there alarm bells that went off? Why wasn't it intercepted? Did we know about it? How far from the Capitol grounds did we know?”

Schumer, the Senate's third-ranking Democrat, added: “Just saying it's a little helicopter, or it's one person, or it was harmless, does not answer these questions. And we need to know what happened.”

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental

Affairs Committee, said in a statement:
“I am deeply concerned that someone has the ability to fly for over an hour through the most restricted airspace in our country, past the White House, and land on the lawn of the Capitol.”

He added that he wants “a full accounting by all federal organizations entrusted with securing the United States from this and similar events.” That Hughes was able to pull off the stunt, Johnson said, is “a reminder that the risk to America and Americans is ever present.”

As Nancy Pelosi noted in comments yesterday (which were almost, but not quite, this shrill), there are reasons to want the Capitol to remain fairly open. And it is fairly open – easier to get into than an airport, for example. That makes it accessible to the thousands of local lobbying and school groups who want to see their Representatives’ office.

But it also makes it permeable by lobbyists.

The big money lobbyists, of course, do far more damage to this country than a gyrocopter ever could, damage that Schumer and Johnson are enthusiastic participants in.

Which is sort of Hughes’ point.

I expect more ironic symbolism from this event going forward, as a bunch of security-industry intoxicated Congressmen take as a lesson from this that they need to insulate themselves even more from the people warning about them insulating themselves from their constituents.