



## AP Distorts Lawmakers' Views On Militia

The Associated Press is under fire for distorting the views and comments of two Oklahoma legislators regarding the formation of a state militia in an April 12 article entitled "Okla. tea parties and lawmakers envision militia."

In the report, AP reporter Sean Murphy claims "some conservative members of the Oklahoma Legislature say they would like to create a new volunteer militia to help defend against what they believe are improper federal infringements on state sovereignty." But according to both of the lawmakers referenced in the article, the international wire service totally misrepresented their statements. They are now [calling for](#) a release of the interview tapes and a retraction.



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After the inaccurate assertions made in the beginning of the article, it proceeds with sinister inuendo to quote a constitutional law professor referencing the Oklahoma City bombing. The report then cites State Senator Randy Brogdon, also a [candidate for governor](#), explaining the historical facts surrounding the intent of the Constitution's Second Amendment protection against infringements upon the right to keep and bear arms.

"He put my comments in a very broad article about the tea party and tried to make it sound like I was now going to be leading a march with guns and muskets on Washington D.C.," Senator Brogdon told *JBS.org* in a telephone interview. "I did not make any kind of statements toward that. As a matter of fact, I made some statements contrary to that — that I believe in the rule of law and I believe in constitutional liberty. Yet none of those were reported, and I even challenged him to make that tape public."

While acknowledging that the reporter got the quote right, Brogdon said he did not think the AP would release the tape because it would force them to write a story putting his comments in context. "This is the classic thing that the liberal media will do to anyone they disagree with," he said. "I obviously have a target on my back because I'm running for governor and I happen to be the most constitutional conservative politician in the state of Oklahoma."

Brogdon said he did not want to speculate about whether the AP or its reporters had an agenda. "But here's one thing I do know: I know what was said in our meeting, and the AP reporter knows what was said, and he has a full recording of it, and if he played that full recording, there would be no doubt," he added. "The press; it is what it is. They're not on my team, and I'm not asking them to be on my team, but it would be nice to have fair reporting."



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 23, 2010

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The report also “twisted” his words regarding a state militia, Brogdon explained. Dating back to the early 1940s, Oklahoma has had an unorganized militia, an organized state guard, and a national guard. “All of those, in section 44 of the Oklahoma Constitution, are referred to as the state militia. That’s what I support,” he said.

“One time, I said: ‘no, I do not support a militia,’ and that was in the context of a commando-style militia marching on Washington — that was the discussion we were having. Ten minutes later he asked the question another way, and I said: ‘yeah, the militia probably is a good idea because — once again — it would remind us of our widely held belief that we have a second amendment right to bear arms. That, again, was put in the historical context of my answer,” the Senator explained. “So at one point, he can have me saying ‘I don’t support a militia,’ then, ‘oh, yeah, a militia probably is a good idea. That is exactly what happened and that is by design, there is no doubt about that. Why? I have no idea. I would just suspect that the press would want to know the truth, but obviously not.”

After the release of the AP militia piece, Senator Brogdon issued a [statement](#) saying his comments “have been misrepresented, taken out of context and are badly misunderstood.” But instead of issuing a correction and apology for the distortions, the AP released another article entitled “[Okla. lawmaker disavows ‘militia’ comments](#).” The problem is that Brogdon did not “disavow” any comments, only the way in which they were misused.

“[The reporter] was able to plant that seed and cause a lot of problems because of it, so no, I’m not happy with his non-retraction,” Brogdon said. “I’ve been telling my political foes for a long time that I’m a danger to the status quo, and I think they finally realize that I mean what I say, so now I’m under attack because of it .... To believe any of what’s been said in the press over the last few days, you would have to believe that I have totally turned my back on everything that I’ve been fighting for over the last eight years, and that’s a return of our constitutional liberties.”

The other lawmaker cited in the AP report, State Representative Charles Key, also told *JBS.org* that his views had been misrepresented and that a statement was inaccurately attributed to him. According to the original AP [article](#), Rep. Key “said he believes there’s a good chance of introducing legislation for a state-authorized militia next year.” But on April 15, Key officially [demanded](#) a retraction and the release of the recorded interview as well.

“The AP decided they were going to do a story, and then they went out to fit things into their story,” Rep. Key told *JBS.org*, adding that the resulting bias was responsible for the false attribution. “They were going to come up with that story one way or the other.” He said he told the AP reporter that the issue of state militia legislation had not even been on his radar screen, answering multiple times that “no, I didn’t know anything about it; no, I was not going to file legislation; no, no one had actually asked me about it.”

After being confronted with the error, Key said the reporter “voluntarily” made a statement about articles submitted by reporters sometimes being changed around by editors in ways that can alter the intent of the person being referenced. “I think what they should do is say they misunderstood — at minimum. They took [my statement] out of context.”

In its subsequent state militia story, the AP also mentioned Rep. Key. But there was no correction or apology. “I think there was an agenda — that’s what I think,” Key said, quickly following that comment with praise for the reporter. “Somebody had an agenda, and it came out in their articles. Just about everybody that was interviewed — to some degree or other — claimed that they were misrepresented.”



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Neither of the interview tapes has been released so far. “The fact is, we already have our own laws about state militia; it already exists. So we couldn’t create one anyway because it’s already in our state laws,” noted Rep. Key. “My desire is that they would be real plain and simple and do a piece that says ‘he didn’t say this,’ but I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

This is not the first time the AP appears to have distorted the views of people it interviewed. For example, as reported by [The New American](#) magazine (an affiliate of [JBS.org](#)), late last year, a widely published AP article minimizing the importance of the “Climategate” scandal entitled “Science not faked, but not pretty” was rebuked by all three of the scientists and experts cited in it. That article was not corrected either.

“It is unfortunate that it’s almost impossible to get the truth out through the main-stream media,” Senator Brogdon told [JBS.org](#). And indeed, it is a disservice to the public when news outlets try to create stories where there are none. Journalists should not be distorting people’s views. The AP must work with the two misrepresented Republican lawmakers to ensure that the truth comes out — what’s left of the news service’s credibility is on the line. Releasing the tapes for the world to hear would be a good first step.

*This article originally appeared at [The John Birch Society website](#).*

*Photo: Charles Key (left) and Randy Brogdon*

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