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Doctors say Shirley Allen isn't crazy: But what about the Illinois police?

Libertarian Party urges reforms following 39-day siege of widow

WASHINGTON, DC — It's official: Shirley Allen isn't nuts. Now it's time to decide if the Illinois state police went a little crazy when they arrested her, the Libertarian Party said today.

Allen is the 51-year-old widow in Roby, Illinois, who made national headlines in October by holding police at bay for 39 days before they shot her with rubber bullets and carted her off for an involuntary psychiatric exam. Doctors declared last week that she posed absolutely "no danger to herself or others," and set her free.

"Shirley Allen poses no danger — and never did," said Steve Dasbach, chairman of the Libertarian Party. "Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the Illinois state police. The officers who terrorized and assaulted this innocent woman must be held accountable."

The standoff began in September in the small, central Illinois town after police tried to serve a court order for a psychiatric examination, requested by family members.

Over the next 39 days, police shot tear gas into Allen's house; cut off her electricity; arrested a neighbor who tried to bring her food and water; deprived her of sleep by shining spotlights into her windows and blasting Barry Manilow songs. Finally, on October 30th, police shot her with rubber bullets and took her to a hospital in Springfield for a mental evaluation.

"If a group of ordinary citizens behaved like these police officers, they would be charged with assault, kidnapping, and malicious destruction of property," Dasbach said. "Police officers should be held to the same standard. If they commit crimes, they ought to be prosecuted."

What can be done now? For starters, Dasbach demanded that Illinois Governor Jim Edgar investigate whether police had the legal authority to use such military-style assault tactics.

"If police have that authority, it ought to be rescinded," said Dasbach. "If they don't, then the rogue officers who terrorized Shirley Allen should be fired and face criminal charges."

Dasbach also recommended that the individual police officers involved in the siege should *personally* reimburse Shirley Allen for damages and for her emotional suffering.

"Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to pay for the crimes of police," said Dasbach. "The officers can never undo the harm they have done, but at least they can compensate her financially."

Dasbach admitted that none of these recommendations would give back to Shirley Allen the 39 days she lost while being held hostage — but said: "If these reforms make it less likely that any other American will have to suffer what Shirley Allen suffered, then they're worthwhile."

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