

Holy Landmines Batman!

By Reg P. Wydeven
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In several past articles I've used silly pop culture references and tied them to legal issues. It's sometimes hard to relate Star Wars, Star Trek or Seinfeld to the law, but that doesn't stop me from trying. Well, I'm glad to know I'm not alone.

Patrick Leahy, the 68-year-old six-term senator from Vermont, has been a huge Batman fan since he was 4, when one Sunday after Mass, his parents stopped at a little drugstore in Montpelier, Vt., his hometown, and bought him a comic book for 10 cents.

Leahy is such a huge Batman fan, he's even had cameos in the movies "Batman and Robin" and "Batman Forever." He's done a voice-over for the part of a governor in a Batman cartoon, and most recently, he had a speaking role in last summer's "Batman – The Dark Knight." In a stirring scene where the late Heath Ledger's Joker and his gang crashed a dinner party, Leahy approached the criminal and said, "We're not intimidated by you thugs." The Joker responded by saying, "You remind me of my father — I hated my father," then grabbed the senator's head, and thrust a knife to his face.

But like me, Leahy uses his passion for pop culture for promoting legal issues. A few years ago, Leahy actually wrote a Batman comic book entitled "Death of Innocents." The comic focuses on the dangers of landmines and the threat they pose to civilians, especially children.

Holy bell-ringer Batman! Leahy has worked tirelessly for two decades to abolish landmines and also cluster bombs. Throughout the Clinton and Bush Administrations, he campaigned for the U.S. to enter into the Ottawa Treaty, which would ban the use of antipersonnel landmines. Leahy also wrote and passed the world's first law banning the U.S. export of landmines.

In addition to landmines, Leahy has opposed the U.S. military's use of cluster bombs in Iraq. Of all the bomblets dropped by the U.S., between 2 and 20 percent are 'duds,' meaning they do not explode on impact and remain on the ground where they remain for unsuspecting farmers, children, or U.S. troops. Accordingly, he created the Leahy War Victims Fund to support medical clinics throughout the world that treat the victims of landmines.

Leahy looks to diffuse any situation involving landmines. He's even exposed the Bush Administration for promoting its policy of the military eliminating the use of "dumb" landmines. Leahy pulled back the curtain by letting the American people know that it has been decades since the U.S. has used this type of landmine.

In addition to his efforts opposing landmines, Leahy's other caped crusade is the children's wing of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier. He donates all of the earnings he receives for his Batman work to the library that he visited daily as a child to read his precious Batman comics. In fact, last summer the library hosted a premiere of The Dark Knight, receiving all of the proceeds from a reception and 350 tickets being sold to the screening, at \$50 apiece.

I have decided to donate all of my earnings from my Star Wars projects to the James J. Siebers Memorial Library in Kimberly. Librarians are scrambling to find room for the extra book.