Kentucky authorities considering stiffer charges in assault on US Senator Rand Paul

Barry Grey
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The alleged assailant in an attack last Friday on Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky may face more serious charges following a statement by a spokesman describing the senator's injuries as far more serious than originally reported.

According to the criminal complaint filed on Friday, Paul, a second-term senator known for his right-wing libertarian views, was mowing his lawn at about 3PM at his home outside Bowling Green, Kentucky when he was tackled from behind by his next-door neighbor, 59-year-old Rene Boucher, a retired anesthesiologist. The complaint said Boucher admitted to "going onto Paul's property and tackling him."

A spokesman for Paul initially issued a statement saying the senator had been "blindsided" and was "the victim of an assault," but that he was "fine." The state police released a report that evening saying Paul's injuries were "minor."

Boucher was arrested and charged with the relatively minor offense of "fourth-degree assault with a minor injury," a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and a fine of up to $500. He was released from jail Saturday on a $7,500 bond. He is scheduled to appear at the Warren County District Court on Thursday.

The news of the attack on a sitting US senator was initially downplayed by the major newspapers. The print edition of Monday's *New York Times* carried no report on the incident. Likewise the print edition of *USA Today*. The *Wall Street Journal* carried a short dispatch from the Associated Press on page two and the *Washington Post*, the main newspaper in the nation's capital, likewise ran a page-two news story.

However, Doug Stafford, a senior adviser to Paul, issued a statement Sunday making clear that the senator had incurred serious injuries that could sideline him for weeks or even months. Stafford revealed that Paul had suffered five rib fractures, including three displaced fractures, meaning the bones had been partly or completely cracked.

The statement noted, "Displaced rib fractures can lead to life-threatening injuries such as: hemopneumothorax, pneumothorax, pneumonia, internal bleeding, laceration of internal organs and lung contusions. Senator Paul does have lung contusions currently. This type of injury is also accompanied by severe pain that can last weeks to months."

"This type of injury is caused by high velocity severe force," Stafford said in an email to the Associated Press.

On Monday, a spokesman for the Kentucky State Police said that the extent of Paul's injuries could prompt state prosecutors to charge Boucher with a felony. The FBI and the US Capitol Police are also investigating the incident. Assaulting a member of Congress is a federal crime, but no federal charges have been announced as of yet.

No motive for the attack has been reported. Both Paul and Boucher are medical professionals and have worked in the Bowling Green area for decades. Paul is an ophthalmologist who has practiced in the town since moving there with his wife in 1993. Paul and Boucher reportedly worked for a time at the same medical facility.

The two have been next-door neighbors in an upscale gated community outside of Bowling Green for 17 years. According to some reports, they have not spoken to one another for years as a result of disputes either over property boundaries, politics or both.

Boucher is a Democrat whose Facebook page reportedly linked to many articles attacking Donald Trump and the Republicans. The page has evidently been taken down since Friday's assault. A former

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member of the city commission told the press that the two had been known to have “heated discussions” about health care.

However, Boucher’s lawyer, Matthew Baker, gave a statement to Fox News in which he wrote: “The unfortunate occurrence of November 3rd has absolutely nothing to do with either’s politics or political agendas. It as a very regrettable dispute between two neighbors over a matter that most people would regard as trivial.”

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the senior Republican senator from Kentucky, took note of Paul’s injury when the Senate reconvened on Monday and wished him a speedy recovery. Alluding to the narrow Republican majority of 52 to 48 in the chamber and the need to secure virtually every Republican vote to pass the Trump administration’s tax cut for corporations and the wealthy, McConnell said, “It’s potentially a challenge” any time a Republican is absent, because his caucus is not “always totally in lockstep.”

Paul was the sole Senate Republican to vote against the budget resolution that was passed last month to enable the Republicans to push through the tax bill with a majority vote rather than a filibuster-breaking three-fifths margin. He is seeking to use his vote to push the Senate tax bill even further to the right, with bigger rate cuts and the effective repeal of Obamacare.

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