

Video Games, iPhones, and Senator John McCain

By [Donald Scarinci](#)

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The picture of Senator John [McCain playing poker on his Smartphone](#) went viral within a few hours after it was posted. Perhaps the reason had less to do with the fact that a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was not paying attention at the hearing to bomb Syria and more to do with the fact that Senator McCain is more tech savvy than many members of the [United States Supreme Court](#) and that the public identified with him because of it.

In case you missed it, a photographer for the [Washington Post](#) captured an image of McCain playing poker on his iPhone during testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The lawmakers were considering whether or not to formally authorize the use of military force in Syria.

After the incident made national headlines, McCain quickly came clean. He tweeted, “Scandal! Caught playing iPhone game at 3+ hour Senate hearing - worst of all I lost!”

He further explained his action in a CNN interview. “Well, as much as I like to always listen in rapt attention constantly with remarks of my colleagues over a three-and-a-half hour period, occasionally I get a LITTLE bored, and so I resorted—but the worst thing about it is, I lost thousands of dollars in this game,” he said. (So as to avoid further controversy, the money he references exists only online.)

While McCain’s critics characterize the momentary lack of focus as a dereliction of his duties, people who looked at the picture or read the news account were not all critics. Many of those who visited this picture were ordinary people who enjoy a good video game themselves. To them, Senator John McCain became a symbol of an ordinary American called upon to do extraordinary things, like vote on whether United States military force should be used in Syria.

Others who clicked on the internet picture were probably tech savvy Americans who were impressed that Senator John McCain, at age 77, has adapted his behavior and become comfortable using his Smartphone as a gaming device. Many attorneys, including some members of the United States Supreme Court, are not tech savvy enough to even use email.

Senator John McCain’s position about using American military force in Syria was settled well before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee met. The fact that he was bored at the Senate hearing and played a video game demonstrates how thoroughly the internet and the Smartphone permeates American life, even among America’s senior leaders and aging population.

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