

As Trump weighs open war with Iran, Bernie Sanders announces toothless war powers bill

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As the Trump administration prepares to launch a catastrophic war against Iran, Independent Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Senator Tim Kaine, Representative Ro Khanna, and Representative Thomas Massie have introduced toothless resolutions that will do nothing to stop the escalating global war.

Senator Kaine of Virginia—Hillary Clinton’s 2016 vice presidential running mate—introduced the “War Powers Resolution” on June 16. Kaine, a member of both the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees, claimed the resolution “will ensure that if we decide to place our nation’s men and women in uniform into harm’s way, we will have a debate and vote on it in Congress.”

Kaine’s bill is a privileged resolution, meaning it must be brought to the Senate floor for a vote within 15 days. On June 17, Representatives Massie and Khanna introduced similar legislation in the House. Both measures aim to block any military action without congressional approval, except in cases where the US military is acting in “self-defense.”

The same day Kaine introduced his resolution, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders presented the “No War Against Iran Act,” which seeks to prohibit any funding for war against Iran without congressional approval. The bill was co-sponsored by Democratic Senators Peter Welch of Vermont, Ed Markey of Massachusetts, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin and Tina Smith of Minnesota.

Unlike Kaine’s resolution, Sanders’s bill is subject to the regular legislative process, meaning it is unlikely to reach the floor for a vote unless it is combined with Kaine’s privileged resolution.

Under conditions in which the United States has been waging a proxy war against Russia for over three years, overseeing a genocide in Gaza for more than 20 months, and is already engaged in a proxy war with Iran, the war powers resolutions amount to nothing more than a

diversion. Their purpose is to channel broad anti-war sentiment among the American population back into the framework of the two-party system and electoral politics.

In his press release announcing the legislation, Sanders portrayed the US-backed Israeli airstrikes on Iran as solely the responsibility of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He wrote: “Netanyahu’s reckless and illegal attacks violate international law and risk igniting a regional war. Congress must make it clear that the United States will not be dragged into Netanyahu’s war of choice.”

On June 16, Sanders wrote on X: “Netanyahu started this war by attacking Iran. ... The U.S. must not be dragged into another illegal Netanyahu war—either militarily or financially.”

Washington’s Zionist war criminal proxy, Netanyahu, would not have launched the latest onslaught against Iran without the full support and foreknowledge of the US government. Israel is not “dragging” the United States into a conflict with Iran; it is carrying out the culmination of decades of bipartisan US imperialist policy aimed at redividing and subjugating the Middle East in preparation for conflict with China.

Prior to the latest US-Israeli military campaign, Iran exported approximately 1.5 million barrels of crude oil per day, with more than 90 percent of it going to China, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

In a subsequent social media post, Sanders exposed the bankruptcy of his nominal opposition to an attack on Iran, concluding with an appeal to Trump to live up to his promises to be a “peace candidate.”

The hollow character of the resolutions is exposed when placed in historical context. While these measures claim to reassert Congress’s constitutional authority to declare and oversee war, that authority has been systematically abdicated for more than two decades by both big business parties in Congress.

Just three days after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US Senate (98–0) and House of Representatives (420–1) granted the president virtually unlimited authority to wage global war under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF).

Following its passage—along with the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution—Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden have carried out military interventions in more than 22 countries. These include bombing campaigns in Libya, Syria, Somalia and Yemen, as well as the full-scale invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indeed, the complete disintegration of any constituency within the ruling class for basic democratic rights is evident in the limited support these resolutions and bills have received. Neither bill has the backing of Democratic leadership in either the House or the Senate. As Trump declares that he alone has the authority to wage war, the Democrats—the nominal opposition party—in fact support aggression against Iran.

Signaling Democratic support for bombing Iran earlier this month, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York released a video on social media on June 2 goading Trump into launching war against Iran. The video begins with Schumer chastising Trump while denouncing “the terrorist government of Iran.”

“When it comes to negotiating with the terrorist government of Iran, Trump’s all over the lot. One day he sounds tough. The next day, he’s backing off. And now all of a sudden we find out that Witkoff and Rubio are negotiating a secret side deal with Iran.”

“What kind of bull is this?” Schumer laments. “They are going to sound tough in public, and then have a side deal that let’s Iran get away with everything? That’s outrageous.

“We need to make that side deal public. Any side deal should be brought before Congress and, most importantly, the American people. If TACO Trump is already folding, the American public should know about it. No side deals.”

TACO is a Wall Street acronym coined in response to Trump’s erratic tariff policies. It stands for “Trump Always Chickens Out.”

When asked on Wednesday whether he supported either Sanders’s bill or Kaine’s resolution, Schumer “did not answer directly,” according to the *Washington Post*.

Another Democratic senator, John Fetterman—heavily endorsed and promoted by the Democratic Socialists of America during his 2022 campaign—has repeatedly voiced support not only for the genocide in Gaza but also for war against Iran. “We’re just destroying their nuclear capabilities,” Fetterman said. “I think that’s entirely appropriate.”

Speaking to Fox News reporter Chad Pergram earlier this week, Fetterman made clear that his genocidal bloodlust extends beyond the Palestinians. “I’m going to vote [Kaine’s resolution] down.... I really hope the president finally does bomb and destroy the Iranians.”

In an interview on *Meet the Press* on June 15, following Israel’s illegal and unprovoked airstrikes, car bombings, and assassinations targeting Iranian leadership, scientists, and innocent bystanders, Senator Adam Schiff (Democrat of California) stated, “I support what Israel’s doing to defend itself. ... I support the administration’s action in helping Israel defend itself.”

Even the small number of Democrats backing the resolutions have made clear they would back US military strikes on Iran if American troops—stationed throughout the region, including in Israel—were harmed.

“There is no Congressperson, including me, who would say, ‘Do not hit back,’ if Iran hits our troops,” Representative Ro Khanna told CNN’s Wolf Blitzer on Thursday. “And I want to make it clear, Wolf: I do not believe Iran can have a bomb,” Khanna added.

The resolutions introduced by Bernie Sanders, Tim Kaine, Ro Khanna, and Thomas Massie are not a serious attempt to stop a catastrophic war against Iran. They are a political smokescreen aimed at dissipating and redirecting mass opposition to the outbreak of yet another imperialist war.

The Democratic Party as a whole, including its so-called “progressive” wing, stands fully complicit in the war drive. To oppose imperialist war, it is necessary to break with the Democratic Party and build an independent socialist movement of the working class.



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