

NSRAA SUPPORTING QUOTES

Hina Shamsi, Director, ACLU National Security Project: “For 50 years, the ACLU has been steadfast in insisting on the necessity and vitality of our system of checks and balances in restraining presidential emergency and war powers—regardless of which party holds power. Unfortunately, as the last two decades have amply demonstrated, presidential powers can all-too-easily be abused, with devastating consequences for human rights and civil liberties, abroad and at home. These reforms are essential for Congress to fix our broken system and reassert its role as a meaningful check on presidential powers.”

Elizabeth Goitein, Co-Director of the Liberty & National Security Program, Brennan Center for Justice: “This reform legislation represents a historic recalibration of power. For too long, Congress has allowed the president to usurp the legislature’s own powers when it comes to war-making and national emergencies. This has made our nation less safe, undermined democratic accountability, and enabled presidential overreach. The bill introduced today would give Americans a real voice in the national security choices that profoundly affect our lives.”

Annie Shiel, US Advocacy Director, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC): “The United States is by far the world’s largest arms exporter. Around the globe, US-made weapons fuel war and violence, devastate civilian communities, and enable gross human rights violations. It’s clear that Congress needs better tools to conduct real oversight and curb harmful arms transfers, and this legislation does just that.”

Naveed Shah, OIF Veteran, US Army, and Government Affairs Manager, Common Defense: “Many of Common Defense’s veteran members joined the military because of 9/11, but now, 20 years later, service members are still being deployed to fight in wars which started before they were born. Common Defense’s veterans strongly support the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act. It is vital for Congress to reassert its war powers authority and ensure the will of the people is heard before U.S. troops are entrenched in another conflict with no end in sight.”

Russ Duerstine, Executive Director, Concerned Veterans for America: “The NSRAA gives Congress the opportunity to reassert its constitutional duty to make decisions about war and peace and to finally turn the page on decades of failed U.S. foreign policy. Our legislators should honor the courage of those willing to put themselves in harm’s way on America’s behalf by having the courage to vote on when our servicemembers are sent to war. By passing this bipartisan measure, Congress will send a clear message to the American people that they have been heard — and after the end of a 20-year war in Afghanistan, valuable lessons have been learned — lessons that will prevent future wars from becoming open-ended, decades-long entanglements.”

Cavan Kharrazian, Foreign Policy Advisor, Demand Progress: “Congress has a duty to provide robust oversight of the Executive Branch, particularly in areas of national security and war. This legislation presents an important opportunity to enhance this oversight, creating a more potent check against endless wars, sweeping national emergencies, and massive arms sales that have wreaked havoc around the world and resulted in an incalculable loss of human lives. While the legislation is under deliberation, we strongly advocate for Congress to continue to utilize the full potential of existing legislative tools, such as the War Powers Resolution, in order to assert congressional authority over matters of war and peace, in accordance with our Constitution. We urge congressional leaders to move the NSRAA reforms forward as quickly as possible.”

Heather Brandon-Smith, Interim Director for Foreign Policy, Friends Committee on National Legislation: "The last two decades of war and unchecked expansion of military operations have caused devastating harm and brought into sharp relief the need for meaningful reform to rebalance the division of national security powers between the legislative and executive branches. Wars should not be run on autopilot. Presidents need meaningful checks on their national security powers if we are to avoid new wars, prevent U.S. complicity in human rights violations, and stop the abuse of emergency authorities. This bill would help put the power back in the hands of the people and our elected representatives, where the Constitution says it belongs."

Stephen Pomper, Chief of Policy, International Crisis Group: "It is past time for the U.S. Congress to reclaim its role in making critical decisions about war and peace. The National Security Reforms and Accountability Act would be a welcome stride forward, creating a framework that encourages public debate and deliberation before the United States goes to war, and serving the twin ends of conflict prevention and democratic accountability."

Yasmine Taeb, Legislative and Political Director, MPower Change Action Fund: "As the largest digital Muslim organization with more than 200,000 members across the country advocating to end our forever wars, MPower Change Action Fund welcomes the re-introduction of the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act (NSRAA). This bipartisan legislation is critical to restoring the balance of national security powers between the president and Congress, addresses executive overreach, and provides Congress the opportunity to reassert its constitutional authority in questions of war and peace. We're grateful to Reps. McGovern and Mace for leading the effort in the House."

Rachel Everette, Policy Counsel, Open Society Policy Center: "The system of checks and balances inscribed in our constitution is central to our democracy, but after decades of executive overreach and congressional acquiescence, we've seen that system fail when it's mattered most. A system where Congress, the people's branch of government, cannot check the actions of the president is not democracy. The reforms included in the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act are designed to reign in unfettered presidential power and ensure that the people have a say when it comes to issues of war and peace."

Scott Paul, Associate Director - Peace and Security, Oxfam America: "Every day, millions of people are impacted by the violence and instability of armed conflict - it is the biggest driver of catastrophic hunger. We welcome Congress taking an important step with this National Security Reforms and Accountability Act to bring US national security decisions and their impact on communities to light. The United States government too often makes life-and-death determinations to use military force or sell arms without sufficient consideration. This process should be subject to public scrutiny and the will of the people, not made at the whim of the President. Oxfam applauds, in particular, the sponsors' proposal to require Congressional approval for the sale of certain deadly weapons. Past administrations have pushed through arms sales to countries with abysmal human rights records - and we've seen the deadly consequences. Had this legislation been in effect during the Trump administration, the bipartisan opposition to arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - which used weapons purchased from the US to commit deadly violations of international law in Yemen - could have been halted. We hope Congress moves swiftly to adopt this potentially lifesaving legislation."

Julia Gledhill, Analyst, Center for Defense Information at the Project On Government Oversight: "The NSRAA flexes Congress' constitutional powers on matters of national security, empowering U.S. taxpayers to hold government accountable for military interventions, arms sales, and emergency declarations. POGO urges Congress to pass it expeditiously."

Aisha Woodward, Policy Advocate, Protect Democracy: “As the past few decades have shown, presidential emergency and war powers can be all-too-easily abused, undermining our system of checks and balances and enabling executive overreach. The National Security Reforms and Accountability Act is critical legislation that would restore to Congress oversight of these vast presidential powers and ensure greater democratic accountability for decisions about war and peace. These reforms are key to Congress reclaiming its constitutional role and making our government more accountable to the people.”

Craig Holman, Ph.D., Public Citizen. “Public Citizen is delighted to see a bipartisan team of Reps. McGovern and Mace take the lead on sponsoring the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act (NSRAA). The executive branch has edged Congress out of its constitutional role of effective oversight over the president’s ability to wage wars and declare national emergencies. The NSRAA would help restore the proper constitutional balance between the executive and legislative branches of the federal government.”

Lora Lumpe, CEO, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, “The American people deserve a voice on where, when, and against whom the U.S. wages war, and to whom it sells lethal arms. By requiring a congressional vote on these decisions, this bipartisan bill democratizes foreign policy—ensuring that the people have a say on matters of war and peace through their representatives in Congress. We strongly support Representatives Mace and McGovern’s efforts to reclaim the central congressional role in war powers and urge Congress to move swiftly to pass this bill and reclaim its constitutional responsibilities.”

Sarah Streyder, Secure Families Initiative: “On behalf of the tens of thousands of active-duty military families we represent, stationed in all 50 states and around the world, we applaud this legislation. If our service members are ever sent into harm’s way, our families deserve for that process to be transparent, deliberative, and constitutional. This bill gets us closer to that goal.”

Mary Kaszynski, Director of Government Relations, VoteVets: “For far too long, presidents of both parties have had essentially a blank check to send troops wherever they want, whenever they want, without a debate or a vote in Congress. The Constitution is clear: Congress, and only Congress, has the power to declare war. It is encouraging to see this bipartisan consensus that the way this nation wages war has veered far off course from the intention of the Founding Fathers and must be recalibrated. We commend Representatives McGovern and Mace for leading this effort to restore the balance of powers established by the Constitution, and for honoring the sacrifices made by U.S. servicemembers and their families.”

Stephen Miles, President, Win Without War: “Going to war, declaring a national emergency, selling deadly weapons — these decisions are supposed to be hard. But administration after administration have made them wantonly, with few checks on their powers, and little accountability for their consequences. The result has been decades of endless warfare and foreign policy disasters. It’s time for a change. The NSRAA is a critical first step to reining in the powers of war, and putting them back where they belong: in the hands of the people.”