

— IN SUPPORT OF —

National Security Reforms and Accountability Act

ACLU National Security Project Hina Shamsi, Director

“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.”

Brennan Center for Justice Elizabeth Goitein, Co-Director of the Liberty & National Security Program

“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.”

Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) Annie Shiel, Senior Advisor, US

“Arms sales are the most common way the United States involves itself in war. At a time when we’re seeing U.S. weapons devastate civilian communities caught in armed conflict, fuel human rights abuses around the world, and facilitate impunity for harm, it’s clear that Congress needs better tools to conduct real oversight and curb harmful arms transfers. This legislation does just that.”

Concerned Veterans for America Russ Duerstine, Deputy Director

“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.”

Demand Progress Cavan Kharrazian, Progressive Foreign Policy Campaigner

“For too long the Executive Branch has overstepped its constitutional boundaries to promote unchecked militarism across the globe, ending countless lives, destabilizing foreign nations, and costing US-taxpayers trillions of dollars. Congress should pass the NSRAA as quickly as possible in order to strengthen its powers over war and establish critical new checks on presidential power.”

Friends Committee on National Legislation Diana Ohlbaum, Legislative Director for Foreign Policy

“Despite its withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the United States is still at war in numerous places around the world. 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.”

International Crisis Group Stephen Pomper, Interim Chief of Policy

“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.”

Open Society Policy Center Morton Halperin

“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 outlined in the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act restore balance and ensure that the people have a say in important matters of war and peace.”

Project on Government Oversight Dylan Hedtler-Gaudette, Government Affairs Manager

“Our system of government, underpinned by the rule of law and the separation of powers, relies on a robust Congress with the power it needs to be an effective check and balance against the other branches. In recent decades, the power balance between Congress and the President has grown uneven, especially in the area of national security. The National Security Reforms and Accountability Act would make meaningful progress toward realigning this imbalance and bringing more accountability and oversight to the exercise of national security authorities, including in the use of emergency powers, the deployments of military assets, and arms sales. Rep. McGovern and Rep. Meijer should be commended for working together on this critical issue.”

Protect Democracy Soren Dayton, Policy Advocate

“The National Security Reforms and Accountability Act is landmark legislation that puts Congress back in charge of war powers, national emergencies, and arms sales. It restores the powers Congress intended for itself in legislation it passed in the 1970s and updates them to respond to more recent abuses. The NSRAA also provides a set of new tools for Congress to more broadly take back power for Congress and is a sign that Congress is taking runaway executive power seriously again. We applaud Chairman McGovern and Representative Meijer for working together to protect Congress's role.”

Public Citizen Craig Holman, Ph.D.

“The executive branch has been usurping greater and great power to set the budget, wage endless wars and declare emergencies, casting aside the constitutional role of the legislative branch to keep excessive presidential abuses of power in check. The National Security Reforms and Accountability Act sponsored by Reps. McGovern and Meijer would restore the proper constitutional balance of power between the executive and legislative branches of the federal government.”

Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft Lora Lumpe, CEO

“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 Reps. McGovern and Meijer’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.”

Oxfam America Scott Paul, Senior Manager for Humanitarian Policy

“Millions of people’s lives are impacted by the violence and instability of armed conflict every day. It is the biggest driver of catastrophic hunger, which has increased 6 times over since the pandemic began. Congress is taking an important step to bring US national security decisions with the National Security Reforms and Accountability Act – and their impact on communities across the globe – to light. Too often, the United States government makes life-and-death decisions to use military force or sell arms without sufficient deliberation. These decisions should not be made at the whim of the President - they should be subject to public scrutiny and the will of the people. In particular, Oxfam applauds the sponsors’ proposal to require Congressional approval for the sale of certain deadly weapons. Past administrations have forced 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 have used weapons purchased from the US to commit terrible violations of international law in Yemen – could have been stopped, saving lives and pushing leaders for peace. We urge Congress to swiftly consider and adopt this potentially lifesaving legislation.”

R Street Institute Anthony Marcum, Resident Governance Fellow

“The Founders tasked Congress with the power to make laws, spend money, and declare war. But in recent times, the Executive Branch has taken it upon itself to unilaterally engage in military conflicts, declare vague national emergencies, and sell arms to foreign governments with insufficient congressional consultation. Fortunately, there is bipartisan momentum to rebalance national security powers between Congress and the President. The National Security Reforms and Accountability Act is an essential step towards that goal.”

VoteVets Mary Kaszynski, Director of Government Relations

“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.”

Win Without War Stephen Miles, Executive Director

“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.”

