

The next morning, the ICU nurse caring for my dad, who is not a basketball fan, told us that she'd checked the score on her way to work just so that she could tell him the good news. For us, that was a real act of care. His fandom was a part of his identity as a New Yorker. The Knicks gave us something hopeful to talk about even as we felt increasingly alarmed that he wasn't responding to that news, or anything else.

And then, there they were, our childhood heroes: Patrick Ewing, John Starks, Allan Houston, Latrell Sprewell, Larry Johnson, and all our favorite players, thirty years older, showing up to support this team that was, for the most part, not born when the Knicks last saw a division championship. It felt like they were coming together specially for my family. The whole city has awakened in a way only New Yorkers can—with innovative watching parties, public joy, orange and blue bagels, and signature snark that makes the city into a home.

My dad bestowed on my brother and me the gift of being part of the crowd. He taught us what it means to cheer through thick and thin, what it means to maintain hope, and that there is power in believing in something “just for fun.” I share the bond of fandom with friends who send me texts throughout every game even if we haven't spoken all year, and I thank my dad for bringing me into this community.

The day he died, we told my dad that the Knicks were one game away from the Eastern Conference title that he'd waited 27 years to see. We told him that they looked like they were going to sweep. We told him the Knicks were honoring him at MSG. We told him the wait was over, we told him we loved him.

You can't time grief. I know that writing this is an attempt to make sense of something that defies logic. I wondered if a Knicks win would exacerbate my grief, as many things seem to right now. I'd cried big slobbery tears when they won the East. But the road through the finals was filled with moments of pure joy and camaraderie, the drama of an historic comeback, and a team so likeable you can't help but smile. It has felt like a balm on this open wound. I think it's healing decades of strife for fans with people who didn't live to see this victory. Karl-Anthony Towns said after winning the championship that he felt like his mom, who many fans know died in 2020, helped pull some strings for this win. “Thank you, mama. I appreciate you getting me one,” he said. Every lifelong Knicks fan has someone like my dad who didn't get to see this championship, but believes they might have helped pull some strings, too.

I know my dad would not want our grief compounded by a Knicks loss. Being a Knicks fan in the '90s was an exercise in resilience. It taught us not to take anything for granted and I draw on those lessons today.

Now, even without my dad, my family cheers because being a fan in New York is a legacy we are tasked with carrying on. A chance to be part of something bigger than us. Something to cheer for through pain.

Go New York. Go New York. Go.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

IRAN

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today to, once again, try to end President Trump's war of choice in Iran.

We are nearly 5 months into this war, with no end in sight. President Trump

and Pete Hegseth have spent at least \$37.5 billion on a war that Americans overwhelmingly oppose. Americans are footing the bill with their tax dollars and at the pump, as higher prices continue.

We have lost 18 American servicemembers, with hundreds more wounded. My heart is with the military families who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Now, after months of chaos, Secretary Hegseth wants Congress to sign off on nearly \$70 billion for this illegal war—nearly \$70 billion more of our money to fund a war that Americans did not choose. That is \$70 billion that we could be using to bring down the cost of housing and help folks get their foot in the door to buy their very first home. That is \$70 billion that we could be using to help families afford childcare and allow parents to get back to work. And that is \$70 billion that we could be using to lower Americans' health insurance premiums, fund our rural hospitals, or put some of the damage from Republicans' cuts to Medicaid to rest—in other words, restore that money.

Instead, this President wants nearly \$70 billion for a war that is spiraling further out of control. That is his priority, not Americans' housing costs or insurance premiums, but rather a war across the globe that nobody asked for.

Even worse, we are 5 months into this war, and this administration refuses to give us straight answers about when this conflict will end.

It does not have to be this way. It is clear the only way to stop this war and find a political solution through diplomacy and tough negotiations is for Congress to force President Trump's hand. He started this war, and he is clearly incapable of ending it on his own.

So on behalf of all of our constituents who are paying the price, I urge my Republican colleagues to join us in bringing an end to this war before another American life is lost.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island—Oregon. I am sorry. Please forgive me.

IRAN

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you. The Senator appreciates your pronunciation of my home State, which people across America have a hard time often figuring out.

Mr. President, I am here tonight joining my colleague from Wisconsin on a very serious topic: that our Nation is at war; that our servicemembers are dying; that for every one who dies, so many are injured—a war that is absolutely hurting us in every possible way.

Operation Epic Fury has become “Operation Epic Failure.”

On February 28, President Trump and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu launched this unconstitutional war against Iran.

President Trump was asked how long would this last. He said: 4 or 5 weeks. He talked about how our overwhelming military power would produce Iranian leaders who would plead—who would plead—for an unconditional surrender.

Mr. President, 16 weeks later, the war was still going on, but then there was agreement to a 14-point outline of a cease-fire agreement. But because it was just an outline, because the countries hadn't worked out their different understandings of the points, just as President Trump completely blotched the war, he completely blotched the negotiation; so it was back to war.

President Trump announced new strikes on Iran, and we are now in the 21st week of that 4- to 5-week war. Time and time again, leaders think they can launch a war and make a series of assumptions that prove to be wrong, and here we are again.

We were wrong with the assumption you could occupy Afghanistan and build something resembling a modern democratic nation.

We were wrong in spending our resources to attack Iraq, which was a counterbalance to Iran and undid this balance in a way that created Iranian influence through an arc that extended clear across to Lebanon.

You know, our Constitution clearly assigns the question of war to Congress. So to my Republican colleagues: Why aren't you insisting that Congress make this decision rather than the President?

Madison summarized: The Constitution supposes, what the history of all governments demonstrates, that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war, and most prone to it. [The Constitution] has accordingly, with studied care, vested the question of war in the Legislative [branch].

That is us. That is us. It is not the President. And the reasoning was that an Executive can too easily make assumptions that something will be quick and easy, but you are committing the lives of our citizens—you are committing the treasure of the Nation—and that should require careful consideration. One person alone, our Founders said, should not be able to take a Republic to war. That is what Kings do. That is what authoritarian strongmen do. But we are not—need I remind you—a strongman authoritarian state—at least we are not by our Constitution. We are a democratic Republic, so let's start acting like it and let's start honoring the structure of our Constitution.

That structure assigns the power of the purse to Congress. So every single Senator should be down here protesting when the President cancels a program that has been authorized and funded. Every single Senator should be down here protesting when the President creates a slush fund to do projects that are not authorized and not funded—that is our responsibility. Unfortunately, this Chamber has failed, for the most part, to defend its role and to defend the Constitution.