

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2020

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021

December 23, 2020

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning, without my approval, H.R. 6395, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (the "Act"). My Administration recognizes the importance of the Act to our national security. Unfortunately, the Act fails to include critical national security measures, includes provisions that fail to respect our veterans and our military's history, and contradicts efforts by my Administration to put America first in our national security and foreign policy actions. It is a "gift" to China and Russia.

No one has worked harder, or approved more money for the military, than I have—over \$2 trillion. During my 4 years, with the support of many others, we have almost entirely rebuilt the United States military, which was totally depleted when I took office. Your failure to terminate the very dangerous national security risk of Section 230 will make our intelligence virtually impossible to conduct without everyone knowing what we are doing at every step.

The Act fails even to make any meaningful changes to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, despite bipartisan calls for repealing that provision. Section 230 facilitates the spread of foreign disinformation online, which is a serious threat to our national security and election integrity. It must be repealed.

Additionally, the Act includes language that would require the renaming of certain military installations. Over the course of United States history, these locations have taken on significance to the American story and those who have helped write it that far transcends their namesakes. My Administration respects the legacy of the millions of American servicemen and women who have served with honor at these military bases, and who, from these locations, have fought, bled, and died for their country. From these facilities, we have won two World Wars. I have been clear in my opposition to politically motivated attempts like this to wash away history and to dishonor the immense progress our country has fought for in realizing our founding principles.

The Act also restricts the President's ability to preserve our Nation's security by arbitrarily limiting the amount of military construction funds that can be used to respond to a national emergency. In a time when adversaries have the means to directly attack the homeland, the President must be able to safeguard the American people without having to wait for congressional authorization. The Act also contains an amendment that would slow down the rollout of nationwide 5G, especially in rural areas.

Numerous provisions of the Act directly contradict my Administration's foreign policy, particularly my efforts to bring our troops home. I oppose endless wars, as does the American public. Over bipartisan objections, however, this Act purports to restrict the President's ability to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, Germany, and South Korea. Not only is this bad policy, but it is unconstitutional. Article II of the Constitution makes the President the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States and vests in him the executive power. Therefore, the decision regarding how many troops to deploy and where, including in Afghanistan, Germany, and South Korea, rests with him. The Congress may not arrogate this authority to itself directly or indirectly as purported spending restrictions.

For all of these reasons, I cannot support this bill. My Administration has taken strong actions to help keep our Nation safe and support our service members. I will not approve this bill,

which would put the interests of the Washington, D.C. establishment over those of the American people. It is my duty to return H.R. 6395 to the House of Representatives without my approval.

DONALD J. TRUMP

The White House,
December 23, 2020.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, veto message.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Communications : Broadband and wireless technologies; Congress : Bipartisanship; Defense and national security : Intelligence; Defense and national security : National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021; Foreign policy, U.S. : Peace efforts, expansion; Veterans : Benefits.

DCPD Number: DCPD202000903.