

Whereas, on June 19, 2021, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the Department of Veterans Affairs would remove the exclusion of gender-affirming surgery from the Veterans Affairs Medical Benefits package, but the Department of Veterans Affairs has yet to fulfill that promise;

Whereas, on September 20, 2021, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs issued the “Benefits Eligibility for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) Former Service Members (VIEWS 5810856)” memorandum detailing how certain former servicemembers discharged under the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy with “other than honorable” discharges could begin to access full veterans benefits;

Whereas, on September 20, 2023, the Deputy Secretary of Defense announced that the Department of Defense would proactively review the military records of certain veterans discharged under the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy to identify those who may be eligible for discharge upgrades;

Whereas, on April 25, 2024, the Department of Veterans Affairs posted a final rule eliminating the regulatory bar for “homosexual acts involving aggravating circumstances or other factors affecting the performance of duty” as an obstacle to benefits, which could help reduce the disparity that LGBTQ+ veterans face in applying for their benefits;

Whereas, on June 26, 2024, President Joseph R. Biden pardoned veterans who had been convicted in military courts for consensual sodomy between 1951 and 2013 under former article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice;

Whereas, on January 27, 2025, President Donald J. Trump signed Executive Order 14183 (90 Fed. Reg. 8757; relating to prioritizing military excellence and readiness), which reinstated the ban on transgender servicemembers and directed the Department of Defense to end its usage of pronouns and prevent transgender people from using facilities that align with their gender identity;

Whereas, on February 7, 2025, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum halting all gender-affirming medical procedures for servicemembers;

Whereas, on February 26, 2025, the Department of Defense announced that transgender and nonbinary servicemembers are “no longer eligible for military service” and “will be processed for separation from military service”;

Whereas, on March 17, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will no longer offer gender-affirming hormone therapy to veterans who were not already receiving such care; and

Whereas challenges still exist for LGBTQ+ servicemembers and veterans seeking equitable treatment in service and access to benefits: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes September 20, 2025, as “National LGBTQ+ Servicemembers and Veterans Day”;

(2) celebrates the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (referred to in this resolution as “LGBTQ+”) servicemembers and veterans who have served in the Armed Forces;

(3) regrets the harm done to LGBTQ+ servicemembers and veterans under the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and earlier policies, bans on transgender servicemembers, and other policies that discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity;

(4) recognizes how “other than honorable” and “dishonorable” discharges given to LGBTQ+ servicemembers on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity—

(A) prematurely terminated the careers of LGBTQ+ servicemembers in the Armed Forces;

(B) subjected LGBTQ+ servicemembers to the trauma of investigations and criminal charges;

(C) unfairly denied LGBTQ+ servicemembers the honor associated with military service;

(D) deprived LGBTQ+ servicemembers of benefits those servicemembers have earned and deserve as veterans; and

(E) continue to cause LGBTQ+ servicemembers dignitary harm;

(5) urges the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense—

(A) to implement policy changes that restore justice and right wrongs caused by past and present government-sponsored discrimination; and

(B) to conduct further outreach to LGBTQ+ service member and veteran communities to ensure that those discharged based on their sexual orientation and gender identity can receive their benefits;

(6) urges the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to ensure that transgender veterans and servicemembers and their families have access to the full range of health care, including gender-affirming care; and

(7) urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to remove the exclusion of gender-affirming surgery from the Veterans Affairs Medical Benefits Package.

SENATE RESOLUTION 409—RECOGNIZING THE 74TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE PHILIPPINES AND THE STRONG BILATERAL SECURITY ALLIANCE BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS IN THE WAKE OF ESCALATING AGGRESSION AND POLITICAL LAWFARE BY THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Mr. RICKETTS (for himself, Mr. COONS, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. Kaine, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BUDD, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. FISCHER, and Mr. BENNETT) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 409

Whereas the United States and the Philippines have maintained diplomatic relations for 79 years, founded on the basis of deeply interconnected strategic and economic interests and close bonds between our two populations;

Whereas the United States-Philippines partnership was forged in blood, as more than 20,000 Americans and hundreds of thousands of Filipinos were killed during the Philippines campaigns during World War II;

Whereas, following the Japanese invasion and occupation of the Philippines from 1941 to 1945, the former United States commonwealth secured its official independence on July 4, 1946;

Whereas, in March 1947, the United States and the Philippines signed a Military Bases Agreement;

Whereas, on August 30, 1951, the United States and the Philippines signed a Mutual Defense Treaty;

Whereas the Mutual Defense Treaty makes clear the United States-Philippine collective intent to resolve international disputes

peacefully, undertake separate and joint development of the capacity to resist attack, and consult with one another when the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of the United States or the Philippines is under threat of external armed attack in the Pacific;

Whereas the Mutual Defense Treaty is the foundation of our security alliance and all other enabling defense agreements between the United States and the Philippines, including the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement;

Whereas the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement allows for a strengthened United States military presence in the Philippines to increase bilateral cooperation and interoperability and to provide training to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, with increased rotation of United States military personnel and assistance devoted to strengthening the territorial defense and humanitarian and maritime operations of the Philippines;

Whereas, in February 2023, the United States and the Philippines committed to designating four additional locations under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, increasing the total from five to nine;

Whereas those locations have strategic value for the United States and the Philippines, increase confidence in the alliance, and provide real opportunities for operational cooperation to advance shared security priorities;

Whereas the Mutual Defense Treaty serves as a deterrent against the increasing territorial aggression by the People’s Republic of China in the South China Sea;

Whereas, in 2009, the People’s Republic of China began unlawfully extending its territorial and sovereignty claims in the South China Sea under its “nine-dash line” construct, violating the territorial rights and internationally recognized exclusive economic zones of the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam;

Whereas, since 2014, the People’s Republic of China has substantially expanded its ability to monitor and project power throughout the South China Sea via the construction of militarized artificial islands;

Whereas, on September 25, 2015, at the White House, President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping stated that “China does not intend to pursue militarization” of the Spratly Islands and China’s outposts would not “target or impact any country”;

Whereas, on July 12, 2016, the arbitral tribunal constituted under Annex VII to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea unanimously decided to invalidate the People’s Republic of China’s claim to nearly 90 percent of the South China Sea, including areas determined by the tribunal to be part of the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone and continental shelf;

Whereas, despite the decision being final and legally binding, the People’s Republic of China, which refused to participate in the arbitration, has continued to reject and further violate the decision;

Whereas the People’s Republic of China has employed a variety of assertive and aggressive tactics against the Philippines, including through its coast guard, research vessels, and commercial maritime vessels, to coerce and enforce its arbitrary and unlawful territorial claims in the South China Sea, such as by ramming, shadowing, blocking, encircling, firing water cannons at, and using military-grade lasers against Philippine civilian ships and military vessels;

Whereas the People’s Republic of China has repeatedly denied the Philippines from lawfully delivering humanitarian supplies to

members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines stationed at the BRP Sierra Madre at Second Thomas Shoal;

Whereas, on June 17, 2024, coast guard sailors from the People's Republic of China brandished knives and other weapons in a clash with Philippine naval vessels attempting to resupply marines on Second Thomas Shoal, resulting in a severe injury to a member of the Armed Forces of the Philippines;

Whereas, on August 27, 2024, the Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Paparo, said the United States military is open to consultations with the Philippines about escorting Philippine ships delivering food and other supplies to the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the South China Sea;

Whereas, on December 4, 2024, Chinese Coast Guard and PLA Navy vessels conducted dangerous maneuvers near Scarborough Shoal, deploying water cannons against Philippine Coast Guard vessels;

Whereas, on February 18, 2025, a Chinese PLA Navy helicopter flew as close as 3 meters above a Philippine aircraft conducting a routine flight over Scarborough Shoal;

Whereas in March 2025, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth visited the Philippines for his first trip to an Indo-Pacific partner, and committed to deploy additional advanced military capabilities to the Philippines, conduct bilateral training between both nations for high-end operations, prioritize bilateral defense industrial cooperation, and launch a bilateral cyber campaign;

Whereas, in April 2025, the Chinese Coast Guard temporarily deployed on Sandy Cay, an unoccupied reef located two miles from Manila's largest outpost in the South China Sea, and placed a Chinese flag, indicating an intention to annex, expand, and possibly militarize the feature;

Whereas, in May 2025, the United States and the Philippines conducted Exercise Balikatan 2025, the largest-ever iteration in its 40-year history that included participation by more than 14,000 U.S., Filipino, Australian, and Japanese service members as well as the first deployment of the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS);

Whereas, on August 11, 2025, a China Coast Guard vessel executed a dangerous maneuver and collided with a Chinese Navy vessel as it was harassing a Philippine Coast Guard vessel conducting a humanitarian mission within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone at Scarborough Shoal; and

Whereas August 30, 2025, marked the 74th anniversary of the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Philippines: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) celebrates the 74th anniversary of the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Philippines and the longstanding alliance between our two nations;

(2) appreciates the trust of the Philippine people in the bilateral alliance and their support for increased defense cooperation and United States military presence in the Philippines;

(3) acknowledges the determination of the people and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to resist coercion by the People's Republic of China;

(4) condemns the People's Republic of China's unprovoked aggression and political lawfare in the South China Sea to enforce its unlawful territorial and sovereignty claims;

(5) rejects the People's Republic of China's coercive and destabilizing plans to establish a so-called "national nature reserve" at Scarborough Reef;

(6) reaffirms that Article IV of the Mutual Defense Treaty extends to armed attacks on the Armed Forces, public vessels, or aircraft of the Philippines, including the Philippine Coast Guard, anywhere in the South China Sea;

(7) considers aggression by the People's Republic of China in the Philippines' internationally recognized exclusive economic zone to be a direct assault on its sovereignty and territorial integrity;

(8) urges the President to continue to take appropriate and necessary actions in response to escalatory behavior of the People's Republic of China in order to restore deterrence and help the Philippines defend itself;

(9) supports the unwavering commitment of the United States to deepening security cooperation with the Philippines, including advancing Philippine defense modernization and enhancing interoperability through military exercises, training, joint patrols, and increased information sharing;

(10) supports other nations growing their political and security partnerships with the Philippines;

(11) commits to advance cooperation among the United States, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Australia; and

(12) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to the right to freedom of navigation and overflight, respecting maritime rights under international law, and ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

SENATE RESOLUTION 410—CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT TO RECOGNIZE A DEMILITARIZED STATE OF PALESTINE, AS CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE PRINCIPLES OF A TWO-STATE SOLUTION, ALONGSIDE A SECURE STATE OF ISRAEL

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. KAINE, Ms. SMITH, Ms. BALDWIN, and Ms. HIRONO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 410

Whereas, in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181, calling for the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, with international recognition;

Whereas, in 1967, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, establishing the concept of "land for peace";

Whereas, in 1988, the Palestine National Council formally declared the establishment of the State of Palestine, which the United Nations General Assembly acknowledged in subsequent resolutions;

Whereas, in 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted to grant Palestine non-member observer state status based on pre-1967 borders;

Whereas over 140 of the 193 United Nations member states currently recognize Palestinian statehood, including major United States allies;

Whereas administrations of both political parties in the United States have long affirmed that a negotiated two-state solution is the only viable path to an enduring peace in the region;

Whereas acts of terrorism and violence by Hamas and other terrorist groups, as well as their rejection of the State of Israel as a national homeland for the Jewish people, obstruct prospects for peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians;

Whereas the holding of free, fair, and inclusive Palestinian elections is essential for re-

newing legitimacy, national unity, and paving the way for meaningful negotiations toward an enduring two-state solution;

Whereas actions and policies by the Government of Israel rejecting a two-state solution, including the July 2024 vote in the Knesset declaring opposition to Palestinian statehood, intentional expansion of settlements in the West Bank, proposals of annexation, and the deepening of the occupation, further undermine prospects for peace and regional security;

Whereas key Arab countries in the Middle East, most notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, have expressed a willingness to normalize diplomatic and economic relations with the State of Israel if there is a clear and irreversible pathway towards Palestinian statehood;

Whereas the July 29, 2025, New York Declaration led by France and Saudi Arabia along with a number of key Arab and European countries condemned the October 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas, insisted that Hamas must not govern Gaza after the war, and reaffirmed their commitment to the recognition of a Palestinian state;

Whereas, in an August 30, 2025 letter, Palestinian Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh wrote to Secretary of State Rubio that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is "committed to peace, non-violence, and the principle of one authority, one government, one law, and one legitimate security force, and confirmed PA commitment for a demilitarized state"; and

Whereas failure to advance a two-state solution risks entrenching an unacceptable permanent occupation, further destabilizing the region, and undermining United States interests and values: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) calls on the President to recognize a demilitarized State of Palestine, as consistent with international law and the principles of a two-state solution, alongside a secure State of Israel;

(2) reaffirms that a two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in mutual recognition and dignity, must provide for Israel's security and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination;

(3) urges the Palestinian Authority to follow through on commitments it has made to European partners as part of the recognition process, hold elections in 2026 and continue implementing key reforms to ensure there is democratic legitimacy in securing self-determination for the Palestinian people;

(4) recognizes that the current trajectory of settlement expansion, annexation, rejection of Palestinian statehood, and ongoing violence and acts of terrorism is incompatible with peace and must end;

(5) believes there is a historic opportunity to simultaneously pursue a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a comprehensive regional peace between Israel and all of its Arab neighbors, unlocking the potential for a more secure and prosperous Middle East;

(6) calls on Hamas to end its campaign of terrorism, lay down its arms, and provide for the unconditional release of all hostages, and also calls on Israel to take immediate steps to end the war in Gaza and surge humanitarian aid into the territory; and

(7) calls upon Israeli and Palestinian leaders, together with the Arab world and international community, to begin working on post-conflict security, governance, and reconstruction that leads to a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel at peace with all of its neighbors, including the State of Palestine.