

will actually undermine our elections and sow distrust in the elections. But I want to present letters and calls I have received from Vermonters, including our town clerks and their experience and their judgment about what this will do.

We are very proud in Vermont that we have a very high voter participation rate and no fraud, and that is a point of pride that is shared among Republicans, among Independents, and among Democrats.

These are the words of a town clerk in Vermont:

I have serious concerns regarding the SAVE Act, specifically the barrier it creates for voters and the unnecessary administrative and infrastructure burden it will place on election officials.

If the SAVE Act is enacted, it will put a disproportionate burden on women, low-income families, and anyone who has changed their name since birth. Requiring the documentation to prove a name change can be difficult. It can be expensive.

Many women do not have just one name change, and they may have several due to multiple marriages or divorces, each requiring additional documentation to create a paper trail. Even if the government were to provide a free ID, the underlying documents needed to obtain that ID are rarely free.

Consider the practical reality. What if a voter loses their documentation in a house fire or a flood?

By the way, we had three floods 3 years in a row on July 14.

They lack the time or resources to replace these documents in time to cast their vote.

By the way, that matters to Vermonters of all political persuasions.

Furthermore, if a voter is struggling to put food on their table and does not have a copy of their birth certificate, they should not be forced to choose between feeding their children and exercising their right to vote.

Would voters be forced to use provisional ballots, and if so, how much more time would my office—

This is the clerk's office—

need to spend processing those after the polls close?

Recently, I had an 85-year-old woman come into my office, deeply distressed. She doesn't have a driver's license, a passport, or any other documents that are required under the SAVE America Act. Yet she has voted in every election her entire life. She is terrified that her right to vote will be stripped away.

In a small community like ours, we know our neighbors. Requiring her to produce a birth certificate she hasn't seen in decades ignores the reality of local governance.

And as an election official, I also have significant concerns regarding the logistical challenges this creates. How are we to verify the authenticity of various out-of-state documents? What system will I be provided—

This is the clerk—

to ensure these documents are legitimate?

Federal databases are not always updated in real time. If the act requires verification against the federal database, any lag in the system would wrongly flag eligible citizens as ineligible.

Managing the nuances of local, primary, and federal elections is already a complex task, even for the most seasoned officials. This act represents yet another unfunded mandate.

Our taxpayers are demanding lower taxes, and how can we implement this massive ad-

ministrative shift without raising taxes or diverting funds for other essential services?

Elections are the heartbeat of our community, and as an election official, my priority is ensuring that every eligible neighbor can cast their vote without undue hardship.

The SAVE America Act threatens to turn a straightforward civic duty into a costly, bureaucratic nightmare for our town and its residents. We must ensure that our laws protect the right to vote for all citizens, regardless of their age, sex, income, or life circumstances, rather than creating an unfunded mandate that our taxpayers cannot afford.

Another former town clerk wrote:

I am thoroughly horrified by the onerous requirements for registering to vote. As a former town clerk, I have always believed that a well-functioning democracy should do everything in its power to encourage people to vote, not throw up roadblocks that effectively block millions of people from doing so.

Though no one wants noncitizens to be allowed to vote in federal elections, multiple studies have demonstrated that this is an extremely rare event.

From a cost-benefit standpoint, the SAVE America Act makes no sense. I believe the risk of harm to millions of current and future voters vastly outweighs the risk of non-citizen voting, which is a relatively minimal issue.

Mr. President, that is what is called Vermont common sense.

If Congress and the public believe that showing a valid ID at the polling place is something that should be implemented across the country, this should be proposed in new legislation that will be delayed until at least 2028 so that everyone is given the opportunity to obtain a federal identification card, which can be used for the purposes of voting.

It is ironic that the Republicans, who have historically been opposed to a national ID card, are now the ones screaming the loudest for documentation.

There is absolutely no reason that the bill should specify that a valid driver's license or a REAL ID card should not qualify as sufficient documentation to establish one's eligibility to vote. I believe this is simply a callous attempt to disenfranchise millions of people of color and those of lower socioeconomic status, as well as women who have chosen to change their names upon marriage.

Another clerk writes:

As a former town clerk who managed many Federal elections over the course of my career, I always felt comfortable with the Vermont registration form that asked a number of questions of people who are required to sign an affidavit as to the accuracy of their residency and citizen status. The penalties for perjury are severe, and there is little to no incentive for a noncitizen to risk their status in the United States by illegally attempting to vote.

Many voter registrations take place through the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the creation of the so-called motor voter system has vastly improved the ability of officials to ensure that voter lists are accurate and up to date. Additionally, the Vermont election management system is an online registration system that requires either a Social Security number that can be cross-checked or a valid Vermont driver's license number. Both of these systems are fully functional in Vermont and offer convenience for residents as well as enhanced accuracy in the maintenance of voter lists in the conduct of elections.

The clerk continues:

I would venture to suggest that the SAVE Act, in its current form, would render those systems obsolete and create a huge problem for town clerks, members of the board of civil authority, and voters by disallowing driver's licenses and REAL ID cards as an acceptable form of identification. Both of these systems would be rendered unusable. Voters in my State, they have called, they have emailed, and they have written to me with their concerns.

Another Vermonter, a Vermonter from Stowe:

I am writing to voice my concern over the protection of my voting rights and the voting rights of millions of other married women.

I recently needed to renew my passport. I, fortunately, have my original birth certificate, but found out I no longer had an original copy of my marriage license. It took me significant time, effort, and money to obtain the original, and then to have the passport expedited in order to get it on time for my trip. We are talking months. I was fortunate that I had my birth certificate and, as I would imagine, that many people do not.

In her view, this bill is outrageous.

One Vermonter in Hinesburg said:

I am hearing rumblings that the Senate will be taking action on the SAVE Act that, unfortunately, passed in the House.

In this person's view, this is a voter suppression bill.

Personally, I have already purchased copies of my birth certificate and my marriage license, even though I have a passport, because I wanted to be damned sure I can vote. But, obviously, there are many people who won't be able to access their needed proof of eligibility. If this bill goes through, they will therefore be denied one of their basic rights as Americans.

"I am pretty sure you are going to vote no on this," she says to me. "I just wanted to let you know that I am against it too."

By the way, she is right. I want this Vermonter to know they are right.

Another voter in Winooski:

Please vote no to the SAVE Act. It's a solution in search of a problem because voting by undocumented people does not happen in any significant degree in this country.

It will disenfranchise millions of voters. It is essentially a poll tax on anyone who has changed their name at any point in their life, which means many women, amongst others, will be unable to vote.

We have watched SCOTUS erode the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by degrees.

The SAVE Act will be a death blow—

in the opinion of this writer—

to the work of so many to enable people to vote, that some even sacrifice their life for. And it is further endangered by the lies about this act.

I am listening to my constituents. We all need to listen to our constituents and our local leaders. We cannot advance a bill that will disenfranchise voters. We cannot block access to the ballot box. We cannot limit voices, nor can we stop, nor should we stop, nor should we impede people from voting. I cannot and will not support the SAVE Act.

IRAN

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I want to speak on the topic of the war in Iran.

As I am standing here, 3,000 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne are on their way to Iran. These are elite paratroopers who are trained to jump into enemy-held territory. They will join 5,000 marines who are being sent from Japan and California.

How did we get here?

On February 28, President Trump launched this war—something he is now calling an “excursion”—with a massive display of U.S. military power and dominance. It was stunning. In the opening days, more than 8,000 targets were struck in Iran. More than 120 Iranian vessels were damaged or destroyed, nearly eliminating Iran’s ability to launch drones and missiles. Iran’s military and civilian leadership was decapitated, and that includes the then-Ayatollah, who was the leader, now replaced by his son. It was an incredible demonstration of military power and execution of military might, just like Midnight Hammer was in June.

Things are different today. We face something completely unpredictable, and we have had no discussion or debate about it. We face what has happened in Iraq and what has happened in Afghanistan, and that is that a country with limited power has asymmetric power. It is confronting us with the limits of what can be accomplished with military power.

Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, and to the shock of most Americans, there appears to have been very little, if any, planning on the part of the folks who pushed us into the war about what would happen when the strait was closed. The Iranians really don’t need massive military power to keep the strait closed. A drone strike or a mine that hits a vessel that is going through, whether escorted or not, means that Iran has a vote: They can attack.

It also means international shippers have a vote: Do they want to risk their cargo and their crew when that is an active military combat zone?

They have answered that: No. There are hundreds of oil-carrying cargo vessels on both sides of the strait that won’t proceed through.

The President has to make a major decision. We have to make a major decision. His decision appears to be that he will escalate this war. He will put his faith that there is a military solution to resolving an outcome. That is despite the experience we have had in which we have consistently been shown the limitations of what can be accomplished with our extraordinary military.

By all indications, the President has chosen a path of escalation: the marines I mentioned, the paratroopers I mentioned, the massing of our military assets in the region, the attacks I outlined, and the \$200 billion request that is coming our way. That is an extraordinary request of the American taxpayer. It is \$60 billion more than President Bush requested in his supple-

mental to fund the opening months of the Iraq invasion in 2003.

Escalation at this point—and that is the decision that is upon us—is going to be irresistible. That is in the context of the President’s getting intelligence assessments from our intelligence community, as well as from the Israeli intelligence community, that the hope for the collapse of the Iranian regime will not occur. It is intact. They have lost many of their leaders, and they have replaced all of those leaders whom they have lost.

So do we expect that this paratrooper expedition and this marine expedition can change that? That is a question that this body must debate.

One of the weaknesses of our position right now is that the President did bypass Congress in making his decision to go on this “expedition.” The President also bypassed the American people by not addressing them and outlining with clarity the goals that he seeks to accomplish, the means by which he hopes to accomplish them, and the expectation of the sacrifices that American citizens will have to make in order to achieve his goals.

In a democracy, this is not just something that is done because it is nice to do. In a democracy, having public backing for a war is not optional; it is a strategic necessity for success. There has been no effort to engage the public, and, indeed, public opinion of the wisdom of this shows that barely 40 percent of Americans support this war and that more than 60 percent think our military action in Iran has been excessive.

This reservation that we are seeing on the part of the American people about this war is understandable. There has been no explanation of the goals and the expectation about an outcome. There has been no candor about what this war will cost. And \$200 billion as a supplemental is a downpayment on more to come; \$200 billion is literally a \$1,400 tax on every single American household.

The average American family is also going to pay an extra \$2,000 at the pump with the increase in gas prices. Families in Vermont are going to pay \$1,000 more to heat their homes.

Our small farmers in Vermont and in the Presiding Officer’s State are going to pay about 35 percent more for fertilizer just as planting season begins.

We owe candor to the American people when it comes to what is going to be required for this war.

The other essential obligation we have in making a decision about going to war is to the men and women we will ask to go to war because of our decision or because of our indecision.

When I was first in Congress, I attended the funeral of a young Vermont marine. He died at the age of 21 in the siege of Fallujah. He died on Thanksgiving day. We all honor him as a hero, just like the other Vermonters who fell in post-9/11 wars.

In Vermont, at that point, we had the highest casualty rate on a per-capita

population basis of any State in the Nation.

We are so proud of the commitment of service that our young Vermonters give to our country.

They step up because they believe in us. They believe that, in a democracy, they serve us by volunteering, and they subjected themselves to the authority of the Commander in Chief, a civilian. And they will show up, and they will serve at the call of the Commander in Chief.

We, in Congress, have a role to play, and it is to weigh in on the decisions of where and when we will send young men and women into harm’s way. They do their job; we are not doing our job.

We have had no hearings. We have had no debate. We have had no discussion. It is just happening. We are sleepwalking passively into a war that could be yet another war in the Middle East.

Yes, it is true: The Iranian regime is dangerous. Saddam’s regime was dangerous. The Taliban was dangerous. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, we did escalate, and we stayed. You couldn’t get out because we didn’t make a decision. We were there and justified staying because we were there in the first place.

We are at that moment with what is occurring in Iran. And, yes, it is an evil regime. Yes, we want them not to have a nuclear weapon. But is diplomacy to be abandoned? Is unilateral action to be chosen? Is that to be done where we have literally no debate and no discussion?

It is the wrong decision, and we face very soon a question of whether we will support a \$200 billion expenditure for that war. The President calls it an excursion, but we all know better. We must make a decision, and I have made a decision. I will not support \$200 billion for a military “excursion” in Iran.

The burden of war is borne by those who fight it, the young men and the young women who put themselves in harm’s way because we sent them there. They are the ones who suffer the loss of life, devastation in their families, lifelong injuries, PTSD. But the true burden of war is borne by those who fight, not by those who decide. Is it not our responsibility—our minimal responsibility—to decide? We are not doing that. We are passively backing into a war with no debate, no discussion, no profound appreciation of what we are asking the young men and women of this country to subject themselves to. We owe them more than that.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

SAVE AMERICA ACT

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, we are fortunate. We are blessed to inhabit a country where freedom is the norm, where popular sovereignty is the objective, and has been since the dawn of our Republic. We are celebrating this year the 250th anniversary of this country,