

them a clear, thoughtful, rational plan for what comes next.

Some 2 months later, the regime retains the ability to strike across the region. They continue to disrupt shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. And while the administration may point to ongoing negotiations, events on the ground and the rhetoric coming out of Tehran tell a different story.

If the United States steps back abruptly and prematurely, we almost certainly leave their critical capabilities intact, we risk a new set of leaders who are even more radicalized against us, and we all but invite retaliation against American military forces, our allies, and the American people.

Those are not risks I am willing to take. But the answer is not a blank check for another endless war, nor is it open-ended authority for the administration, with no guardrails, no oversight from Congress, and no clearly defined mission. The answer, I believe, relies on careful, deliberate use of congressional power. And this is where I think we are falling short, because we are approaching the 60-day mark under the War Powers Act.

So what comes next?

The Constitution is clear on this point: Congress holds the power to declare war and authorize the use of military force. And yes, the President must have flexibility to respond to emergencies and imminent threats, and he does. And he does. But those are not ongoing military campaigns like we find ourselves currently mired in.

In such conflicts, the President and the administration must explicitly state their goals, their plans, and the metrics for success, and if we don't press them to define those parameters, we may risk repeating history.

One of the clearest lessons from the War on Terror is that the failure to think beyond the initial phase of military operations can lock us into a conflict that becomes more lengthy, more deadly, more costly, and more difficult to unwind, which brings me to a concern I have had from the outset of this conflict, and that is the lack of clarity from the administration, from their public statements to the classified briefings we receive as Members of Congress.

When American servicemembers are deployed and lives are on the line, the administration owes Congress and the American people a straight answer about what we are trying to achieve. That is why I have been working with several of my colleagues on an authorization for the use of military force.

This is an authorization, but it is also a restraint. It is not a blank check. It would not grant open-ended authority. Instead, it would seek to establish a framework requiring the President to come to Congress with clearly defined political and military objectives. It would require metrics for success, notice of any changes in objectives, and exit criteria. It would ultimately ensure that Congress is engaged.

AUMFs should precede wars, not be enacted in their midst.

That wasn't a choice for us here, but it cannot be used as an excuse to abandon our responsibilities. We are supposed to represent, engage, debate, vote, and when and where necessary, restrain the Executive. That is why we are supposed to be here in Congress, and that matters most in times of war.

We have already lost servicemembers in the conflict—and God rest their souls—and there is still danger, and more servicemembers will almost certainly be put in harm's way even during an economic blockade.

Now, I think there is a fair and legitimate question that some may be asking. We are looking at an AUMF. We just had a vote on a War Powers Resolution. Actually, we have had several votes on War Powers Resolution, and I have opposed each of them, including the one that we just took today.

So why AUMF and not a War Powers Resolution? The War Powers Resolution we have voted on would have required the removal of U.S. forces from active hostilities. They would have halted operations that were already underway without any framework for what comes next, and that is just something I can't support.

Iran has been targeting United States personnel, our allies, and our partners across the region. I don't believe that we can responsibly tie the hands of our military or walk away in the middle of an ongoing fight without a plan.

We saw in Afghanistan in 2021 the dangers of withdrawing without a strategy. The President should have come to Congress before engaging in military action at this scale that we are seeing now, and that, regrettably, did not happen. So we are now in a position where Congress must step in—not to abruptly end operations but to define them. And that is the difference here.

The War Powers Resolution has attempted to stop this conflict without establishing a path forward. An AUMF recognizes the reality that the U.S. military is already engaged and provides structure and clarity by requiring the administration to define what they are trying to achieve and the means of achieving it. It requires reporting to Congress, and it brings transparency where little has existed over the past 2 months.

Now, I am not introducing an AUMF today, but if we pass this 60-day mark from the start of hostilities with still a lack of a credible plan and information from the administration, it is something that I intend to introduce once the Senate reconvenes here.

So I want to close by saying as plainly as I can: I stand firmly behind our troops. As part of that, I do not take their deployment lightly, and I do not accept that we should engage in open-ended military action without clear direction or accountability.

Congress has a role. Congress has to step up and fulfill that role, that obligation that the Constitution assigns to us. We owe it to the men and women who are serving our great Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I don't know if you remember 1977. But since 1977, this body has passed the 12 appropriation bills on time 4 times since 1977. By the way, this year is not one of them. Since 1977, four times the budget process has worked correctly.

We have had multiple different government shutdowns during that time period, but they are getting worse—not better, as this Congress continues to be able to find cliffs to be able to stand next to and figure out how long we can put our toes over the edge.

The latest one ended today. It was 76 days long, and it shut down the Department of Homeland Security. Now, I remind everyone in this body, the first priority of the U.S. Government is defense and security—the first priority.

This body decided not to fund Homeland Security for 76 days. This is an issue we have got to face.

In 2019, my friend MAGGIE HASSAN the Democratic Senator from New Hampshire, she and I sat down and said: We have got to figure out how to get out of this. This is a cycle that is continuing.

And since 2019, she and I have worked across the aisle to convince our colleagues there is a way to prevent future government shutdowns that would hold Congress accountable but the American people and Federal workers would not feel the effect of it. And it is a very simple straightforward idea that we have worked on now since 2019. It is when this body has not finished their work on time, we stay until the work is finished.

But Federal workers and their families and the programs that are all connected to those Federal dollars, they continue. They are held harmless, while we have to stay until it is done.

Now, that may seem simple, but around this place, that is a radical idea, apparently. We have worked for years to be able to get to the point that we can pass it.

Last session, we brought it to this body and had 57 votes; we need 60, as this body knows full well. We had 57 supporters last time we brought it to this body.

Now, there has been an election since then. We have also had two very long shutdowns since then, and my understanding is there are even more of my colleagues that are stepping forward and saying it is time that we end the shutdown dramas and actually get things resolved.

We don't bring a political solution; we don't bring a messaging solution; we just bring a solution. This solution had been evaluated in previous Presidential time by President Biden's team

in his Office of Management and Budget. It has been reviewed by now President Trump's team, his Office of Management and Budget. Everyone has looked at it and said: Yep, that works.

We have gone through all the technical assistance on it, and now it is time to vote to be able to figure out if once and for all we can end government shutdowns.

Now, the idea, as I mentioned, is simple: We stay here until the work is done. But let me give you an example of what that would look like just in this shutdown. This particular shutdown with Homeland Security, we were shut down for 76 days because my Democratic colleagues did not want to fund ICE or Border Protection, so we had a 76-day shutdown.

During that 76-day time period, the Senate was in session 35 of those days—less than half. For 76 days, the Department of Homeland Security was non-operable, unfunded. We were here 35 of those days. If you think that is bad, let's talk about the House of Representatives. They were in session 29 of those 76 days. In other words, the problem was all over the country, and Congress was AWOL.

We have to determine if we are going to stay and fix the problem, or if weekend plans or time away from here is more important than Homeland Security of all things. We should have never left.

When we ran out of funding, we should have remained until we solved the problem, but everybody left. Let's fix that. Let's make the most simple commitment that we can possibly make to the American people, and that is, if we get to a moment like this again—and we will—we will not leave until the work is done.

Federal workers will not have to worry about not being paid. Contractors will not have to worry about not being paid. Programs will be able to continue to operate. We are the ones that will actually have to stay after class. They won't feel it there. That seems to be a much better option than mass chaos across the country while we suffer no consequences for it.

Now, there has been a lot of conversation in this body, which has been good, to be able to talk about how do we actually not have this happen again. Part of the conversation has been: Let's just pay the employees and not pay the programming but we can still continue to be able to leave and come and go like normal but at least people will be paid.

Interestingly enough, we have had an experiment with that, that exact principle for the last month. For the last month, President Trump has taken some of the emergency funding set aside in the bill we passed last year in reconciliation, has used that to be able to pay employees. So employees of Homeland Security have been paid, but the programming hasn't been done. So literally we have had a test run on that idea. What if we just paid the employ-

ees but didn't pay the programming, wouldn't that solve the problem? What has now been discovered is: Oh, no, that definitely doesn't solve the problem.

CBS News has reported in the last 24 hours that we now have up to 6,000 different residences for just the Coast Guard that their power is being shut off because the bills haven't been paid for the last 2 months. And, amazingly enough, utility folks like to be paid—remarkable.

We have got the Commandant of the Coast Guard who came out and made a statement that was pretty bold for the Commandant to be able to make, but he is dead-on correct. The Commandant of the Coast Guard made this statement about the ongoing shutdown right now of Homeland Security including the U.S. Coast Guard. He said:

It's more than a breach of trust . . . Our Coast Guard men and women, whether they're active duty or reserve military civilians, they've stepped forward and taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution. What they expect in return is just to be paid and [to] provide services.

They don't expect "to have to worry about whether their families are going to be taken care of."

By the way, this is the same commandant at his residence as Commandant of the Coast Guard the power was shut off because the bills hadn't been paid. If you want to go to the Coast Guard station in Hawaii, they were literally working at the station by flashlight.

Now, everybody was being paid, but contracts weren't being paid, contractors were not being paid, and program dollars were not done.

What does that mean? Simple things, like in FEMA, all the fire training centers, all the domestic preparedness conferences, all the things that we do to be able to prepare for a hurricane coming up this fall, those things couldn't happen. All the work to be able to prepare for wildfires, none of that could actually happen. For our Cybersecurity professionals, while we have an ongoing conflict with Iran, many were furloughed or couldn't do their work. While we were preparing for FIFA, for literally the whole world coming to the United States, we couldn't do preparation for security for them coming.

The United States Secret Service, who put their lives on the line to be able to protect the President, much of the executive branch and reporters this past weekend at the White House Correspondents' Dinner—thank you for the work that you were doing—but they had no additional money to be able to plan and operate because this body chose to go home rather than fund them.

Listen, there is a simple way to be able to resolve this for all of us: We stay until the work gets done. And simply saying: We will pay people but then walk away doesn't solve the problem because contractors don't get paid, utility bills don't get paid, all the

grants don't get done, the other tasks are still not there. So just paying the employees but they can't do anything doesn't solve the problem. It just pays people that are sitting at a desk, wishing they could do their job, but they have no money to do it, or in this case, for the Coast Guard, they are working at their station by flashlight.

That should not be so in the United States of America. This is not a partisan bill. It is not even a partisan issue. Republicans and Democrats alike have put a stake in the ground and said: We are going to shut the government down because we are mad. We have both done it on both sides. Let's just say we are done with it.

What I would like to happen in the days ahead, years from now, to have my grandchildren crawl up in my lap and say: Tell me a story about the time when the government used to shut down—because it never happens in their generation. Let's find a way to be able to actually resolve this like grownups, work out our differences, and not have government shutdowns.

I want to thank my colleague MAGGIE HASSAN and her work for this and what she has done to be able to get the text right and to be able to get this resolved.

I want to thank my colleagues in the House that had the exact same text: JODEY ARRINGTON, JIMMY PANETTA.

In a bipartisan basis and bicameral basis, we are dedicated to saying government shutdowns need to end. So I am looking forward to us getting this finally, finally resolved.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following resolutions, which are at the desk: S. Res. 718, S. Res. 719, and S. Res. 720.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions en bloc.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to; that the preambles be agreed to; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")