

their offices, taking computers, knocking on the doors of volunteers without subpoenas.

A few days later, the FBI went after one of the Nation's leading nonprofit voter outreach coordination hubs, America Votes, a DC-based organization that works to turn out voters nationwide. They went after America Votes because it is among the voter organization that funds the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. America Votes works with 400 organizations, including the AFL-CIO, Human Rights Campaign, Planned Parenthood, Emily's List, and the American Federation of Teachers to educate voters and get out the votes. It is an outrage that Kash Patel is sending FBI agents to intimidate advocacy groups that work hard to turn out voters, particularly those of color.

My family has always fought to get out the vote. My parents lived and worked alongside people like Robert F. Kennedy and knew of Martin Luther King's voice. Martin Luther King, Jr., on a trip to Seattle, said: Are we going to be "an echo rather than a voice, a taillight instead of a headlight"?

When I think about what we are seeing today, I see the same thing for my colleagues over here. Are you going to be an echo for the Trump administration about this ludicrous idea of the SAVE Act? Are you going to be an echo for this ludicrous idea that our States that have vote by mail may all of a sudden now be subject to what the President, Homeland Security, and their enforcement of the post office is going to do to our ballots?

Or are you going to be a headlight for the future of our country and the future of our democracy? I ask my colleagues to stand up for your vote, your constituents' votes, and for our rights, because if we don't stop this, I guarantee you, millions of Americans will be disenfranchised.

Our future is much brighter with a system that allows millions of people in my State—80 percent, sometimes, of voters—to vote and do so with certainty and to follow their ballot. Let's not let this 2026 election be stolen by people who want to get rid of the rules that we have lived by.

Too many of those people that I mentioned died to get this right to vote, or the women who fought to get the right in 1920 and to preserve it, or the people who have fought in wars to make sure that we have this privilege and right. Let's hold on to it.

I yield the floor. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

IRAN

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to address a very serious topic, one that I have often addressed on the floor of the Senate during my 13-plus years here but that I have particularly been focused on since President Trump decided to launch a war against Iran on February 28 of this year. And the issue

is whether we should ever be at war without a vote of Congress.

The consequences of the war that President Trump started are pretty well known to the American public. We have now spent in excess of \$50 billion of United States taxpayer money on the war, with the need to spend more to replenish munition stockpiles and repair infrastructure that has been damaged by Iran—United States infrastructure in the nations near that country.

More important than the dollars we have lost are the lives that have been lost—13 U.S. troops including a Virginian, CW3 Robert Marzan, have lost their lives in this war, and thousands of Iranian civilians have been killed.

The damage has not just been to the U.S. Treasury and taxpayers and to our troops and Iranian civilians; it has also been to everyday American families. Because of the instability of the war, the Strait of Hormuz was closed, as all predicted it might be if President Trump launched this war; and that has led to escalating fuel prices. The estimates are that Americans have paid already \$50 billion more for fuel since February 28 than they would have if President Trump had not started this war.

I could go on about the consequences, now being 110 days or so into this war, but I don't think I need to because I think the American public understands them very well.

But I am here today to rise again, as I have beginning within the first few days of the war—essentially every week—to ask my colleagues to do what the Constitution says we should do and direct the President to cease hostilities against Iran until—until—Congress authorizes a war.

The most solemn power, in my view, in article I of the Constitution—the most solemn power for Congress is Congress has the power to declare war, not the President. That was done very deliberately as the Constitution was drawn up in 1787 in Philadelphia because the delegates to the Constitutional Convention believed, even with someone as talented as George Washington ready to assume the Presidency of the United States, that the stakes and consequences of war were so vast that a decision about war should never be in the hands of a single person but, instead, should be vested in the legislative branch so that a decision about sending our best and brightest, our kids, into war—and the Presiding Officer knows more about the real costs of war than virtually anybody in this Chamber—that before we send our best and brightest into war, it should be based upon a very careful and deliberate debate, in full view of the American public so they can understand the stakes, and then war can be initiated once Congress has decided this is in the national interest.

Congress has not done this with respect to the war in Iran, and that is not unusual. Congress has often abdicated

this responsibility over the years. But we take an oath to a Constitution that brooks no end-running on this, that Congress has to own this responsibility. And so I rise again today for the 10th or 11th time—we have tried to have this vote virtually every week—on the floor of the Senate to say no war in Iran unless Congress, by vote, approves it.

In the earlier votes we have had, we have been voting on Senate resolutions, and most of the resolutions have failed, although they have failed narrowly. There was one positive vote on a resolution that I put forward, and it was a motion to discharge that resolution from committee that actually passed the Senate by a 50-to-47 vote. There were some absences that day, but it did pass. And so my resolution is still pending on the floor, but that is not the resolution we are going to be voting on today.

After lunch, I will ask to be pulled up a House concurrent resolution. The Republican-majority House has passed a resolution saying: Mr. President, no war in Iran without a vote of Congress. And this afternoon I will not be pulling up a Senate resolution, which, if successful, would have to go to the House. Instead, I am pulling up the concurrent resolution that the House has already acted upon.

Why is this vote different than the earlier ones we have had? Well, I have already explained procedurally it is a bit different because we are taking up the House concurrent resolution, but that may not necessarily be a difference maker as people try to decide how to vote.

Let me talk about why this vote is different than the earlier votes in terms of the merits of the case—the merits of saying right now to the President: No more war without a vote of Congress.

The first difference is, with each day, the consequences of the war become more apparent. We are acting with more knowledge. Even since the vote we had last week, we now have the administration has come to us with a supplemental request asking for \$80 billion more, largely necessitated by the consequences of the war: to replenish munitions stockpiles and take other actions that wouldn't fully repair damages, for example, that the Pentagon has incurred but would start to.

So we have some more information than last week.

The second thing we have is, I think we have more information about where Members of this body are. Many of us believe the war was foolish and illegal and never should have been started. Many of us believe the memorandum of understanding that was revealed last week is insufficient. Many of us believe both of those things are true.

In fact, I have been trying to monitor the comments of my Senate colleagues, and I would venture to say that about two-thirds of the Senators—maybe even higher now—have either expressed

their belief that the war should never have been waged or their belief that the MOU is inadequate.

And so now we know a little bit more about where this body is, and that is also based upon each day brings more information. The terms of the MOU weren't completely available and hadn't been scrutinized the last time we had this vote.

But the most important thing, I think, that is different about this vote than some of the earlier votes is, thank God, we are in a cease-fire—a fragile one, a fragile one. And the cease-fire is a bit of an intermission where we get to step back—and we should step back—as Congress is engaged on the question of what is the next step.

This effort to cease hostilities is not coming in the midst of active back-and-forth kinetic action between the United States and Iran or Iranian allies. It is a fragile cease-fire, and it is interrupted. But we have stepped back from the most active phase of the war. That is a perfect time for Congress to step back and ask ourselves the question of what should the next chapter be, rather than allowing one man to make that decision.

In fact, it is interesting. I was thinking about this as I walked over this morning: What are the options right now? The options are either a negotiated peace deal or potentially returning to war.

If the Trump administration negotiates a deal that includes anything about the Iran nuclear program, they have to bring it to Congress pursuant to the Iran Nuclear Review Act that I helped coauthor about 10 years ago.

So in the event of diplomacy, the administration must come to Congress. If the administration wants more money for the war, they must come to Congress. They sent over a supplemental request last week. So if the administration has to come to Congress and engage us if diplomacy is the chapter, if they have to come to Congress and engage us if more dollars are needed, we shouldn't say: But you don't have to come to us if you just want to restart the war.

How odd would it be that they would need our permission for diplomacy and need our permission for dollars but not need our permission to start bombing again? I think that odd disharmony, that cognitive dissonance, demonstrates the wisdom of the Framers giving the power to declare war to Congress.

If you have to come to us for diplomacy and you have to come to us for money, you shouldn't be able to end-run us to initiate war on our own.

And so, after lunch, I will make the motion to pull up this House concurrent resolution. I am unaware of an earlier instance of this being done, but it is in accord with Senate procedure to pull up a House concurrent resolution and seek a vote on it.

And it is my hope that with the experience of these 100-plus days and the

knowledge of the consequences and the magnitude of these issues to American families, Congress will stand and deliver on the oath we have taken that the Nation should not be at war unless Congress authorizes it.

I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

IRAN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I want to start by saluting my colleague the Senator from Virginia Senator KAINE for his steadfast adherence to the Constitution of the United States and Congress' role in that Constitution, especially as it relates to war powers.

I rise today in support of this resolution and in support of ending this disastrous and illegal war that President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu launched over 100 days ago.

Nearly 4 months into this illegal and reckless war, the American people have already paid too high a price. There is no good way out of a bad war, but when you are digging yourself into a hole, the best way out is to stop digging.

The debate before us is not a question of whether the MOU signed by the United States and Iran is perfect, but rather the debate is about whether continuing the war would make things better.

And it is clear that continuing this disastrous war will only make things even worse, not better. The terms of this agreement reflect the reality that many of us warned about before this war even began.

We warned that military action would not achieve the grand, strategic objectives its advocates promised. In fact, you could tell that because there was such confusion within the administration about what the real goals of the war were.

We warned that military force would strengthen the more militant elements of the Iranian regime rather than weaken them. We warned that the war would destabilize the region, threaten the global economy, and ultimately leave the people of the United States worse off.

And that is exactly what has happened.

Over 100 days ago, President Trump, together with Prime Minister Netanyahu, launched the war against Iran without congressional authorization. When he did that, President Trump walked away from diplomatic alternatives.

In fact, just hours before launching military action, there was a diplomatic framework being advanced through Omani mediators.

Instead of pursuing the diplomatic track, President Trump chose war, just as he previously chose to tear up the JCPOA. That is the agreement that was negotiated by the Obama administration which had successfully constrained Iran's nuclear program through diplomacy.

That diplomatic framework, the JCPOA, placed meaningful constraints on Iran's nuclear program without dragging the United States into another war in the Middle East.

It had an extremely vigorous inspection regime so that we could detect any effort by Iran to violate that agreement. In fact, the first Trump administration certified that Iran was in compliance with the terms of that agreement.

But shortly after certifying that Iran was in compliance, the first Trump administration—President Trump, his first time in the Oval Office—ripped it up. He just ripped it up. He reimposed sanctions on Iran that had been lifted as part of that agreement.

And so, not surprisingly, when President Trump ripped it up, Iran felt it no longer had to abide by its terms, which started us down the path that brings us here.

Unlike President Obama, President Trump abandoned the effort to get a negotiated solution and joined Prime Minister Netanyahu in starting the war. I think we all remember that Candidate Trump told the country, told the American people, that he would keep us out of wars. He told us he was instead going to focus here at home and bring down prices.

Well, he has done exactly the opposite; started a war, prices are going up.

And now after starting a stupid war, President Trump finally appears to be embracing many of the same underlying principles of diplomacy with Iran that has always been required.

Many of us warned that abandoning diplomacy would increase the likelihood of exactly the kind of conflict we are now seeing. And we were right.

And now, after nearly 4 months of death and destruction, many of the same people in this body who cheered the war on are attacking efforts to end it. And as we discuss a War Powers Resolution, I think it is important to underscore the fact that many of our Senate colleagues who were cheering on the war still were unwilling to bring forth before the Senate an authorization—a congressional authorization—to support the very war they were cheering on.

So they were cheering it on but refused to take responsibility for putting an authorization on this floor, which is Congress' duty with respect to the Constitution if it wants to go to war.

And now, some of the same folks who refused to put forward an authorization to support the war they cheered on are doing their very best to try to prevent the war from ending. And that should concern all of us because every proposal to derail diplomacy ultimately leads back to the same place; it leads back to more war, to more destruction, to more American lives at risk, to more economic turmoil, and billions more taxpayer dollars wasted.

Let's talk about what this war has already cost. We should keep this in mind as we listen to some who want to