

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I come here today to support Senator KAINE's War Powers Resolution.

You know, I am proud of every mission that I completed in Iraq, but I would never wish another needless, endless, unjustified war like the one that I served in on anyone else. I wouldn't wish it on the heroes whose blood would be soaked into that desert sand. I would not wish it on their families, who would spend their days anxiously awaiting for news from half a world away. I wouldn't wish it on the American people, who are desperate for their President to focus on bringing their costs down here at home, not on starting new, expensive, forever wars continents away.

So I am here today to keep a promise I first made two decades ago. I ran for Congress so that when the drums of war started beating once again, I would be in a position to make sure that our elected officials fully considered the true cost of the war not just in dollars and cents but in human lives as well. That was the vow I made to the troops I deployed with and to all those who have served since I hung up my uniform.

Today, I am speaking here under this great Capitol dome to keep that most sacred promise because, sadly, right now, American servicemembers are already in harm's way 6,000 miles east in what could be yet another preventable war. These troops are ready to do their jobs no matter what, just as they have done time after time, tour after tour. So, to me, it is tragic that even as they prepare to do their jobs, our President and certain Members of this Chamber seem so ready to neglect their own.

As we all know, on Saturday morning, without any known imminent threat to America or American interests, Donald Trump launched an illegal military campaign against Iran.

Look, I want a democratic Iran, and I want to see the Iranian people free from the iron grip of its brutal, authoritarian regime, and I am not about to shed a tear for the Ayatollah's death. He was no friend of the United States' nor to his own people. He was responsible for the brutal murders of thousands of his own citizens in just the past few months alone. However, my first concern is always going to be the national security of the United States, and I am troubled because of the consequences that are sure to come because of Trump's actions.

Our troops and Americans all around the world are at greater risk because Trump wanted to thump his chest and look like a tough guy on TV. For no real reason he can explain, Trump is marching us closer and closer to another costly, bloody, protracted conflict—a war without any defined end

state and even without a concept of a plan for how to prevent the chaos and instability that will come next.

Far from making America greater or better or stronger or whatever new adjective he is using this week, Trump's actions have made our Nation and our allies less safe. He has made them less secure.

By continuing to strain our military with wars of choice, Trump is handing a gift to bad actors like Russia and the PRC, as his never-ending chaos makes it harder for our Armed Forces to focus on defending our critical interests in places like the Indo-Pacific.

So, no, Trump's actions over the past 72 hours—or ever—haven't put America first; they have made the situation for America worse.

The sad fact of the matter is that what we are facing today is in large part a manufactured crisis. Iran is no ally of ours. We have been adversaries since long before Trump took office. I have always condemned their proxy activity and ballistic missile program, and I certainly agree that they cannot be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon. But we can't forget that Donald Trump is the one who pulled the United States out of the very deal that was limiting their weapons development program. Trump is the one who made sure Iran no longer had to play by the rules and curb their nuclear production. Trump and his inability to conduct foreign policy are what made today's nightmare a reality.

His historical incompetence is what gave them the matchbox and the motivation to start a fire, and now he is angry that it is starting to catch. He is mad because they are doing the very things his actions encouraged them to do. It is circular logic which has already had fatal consequences—fatal for the six American heroes who have already lost their lives in this conflict and fatal for the hundreds of civilians who have already become the most horrible kind of collateral—moms and dads who this evening should be able to sit down and eat dinner with their little girl, who should be able to kiss their little boy goodnight, who should be able to go bed dreaming of a tomorrow that doesn't include missiles or misery.

Now he has created a power vacuum in Iran, resulting in an unstable regime that is willing to do anything to hold on to power. Now he has created an open invitation for well-funded, organized terrorist groups to swoop in and snatch away any chance the Iranian people have for freedom and self-governance.

War is always tragic, but when it is preventable, it is not just tragic but a travesty too. Trump wouldn't let himself be dragged by the bone spurs to serve in uniform when his country needed him, so how dare he try to drag us into yet another war of his choice today. But this draft dodger is too infatuated with maximum pressure to consider even minimum diplomacy.

Once again, the Trump foreign policy doctrine has proven reckless, senseless, and dangerous—a doctrine in which fact and fiction are one and the same and one in which avarice outweighs advice every damn time.

It is shameful—terrifying—that we have a Commander in Chief who seems to come to military decisions by virtue of temper tantrums and announces them via tweet, a President who doesn't seem to care if he keeps to the path of fire and fury that he has been treading; our own homeland will be in greater danger, more wounded warriors will be sent to Walter Reed, and more fallen heroes will be laid to rest in Arlington; a President who is so obsessed with being the tough guy, that he doesn't seem to give—well, doesn't seem to care; a President who is happy to squander the lives of our heroes for his own personal gain.

Now, after this weekend, he has officially traded deterrence for instability and chaos and made us all less safe in the process—Americans, certainly, but also our partners in the region and the Iranian people themselves, who did not ask for any of this; Iranian families who suffered decades under the Ayatollah's tyrannical iron grip and who, at long last, want to feel safe and secure.

Look, Trump may have run to his podiatrist instead of running toward danger in Vietnam, but I actually know what it is like to leave your blood, your sweat—your limbs—in a war zone half a world away. So I know what is at stake for the thousands of troops this administration is getting ready to send into harm's way, and I can tell you this: It is a whole lot easier to cover your eyes and order other Americans to sacrifice if you don't have to sacrifice anything yourself. It is much easier to ignore the everyday realities of war from inside the hallowed halls of the White House, but it is nearly impossible if you have been outside the wire yourself.

So as those drums of war echo louder than they have in years, I am here today because, despite what he thinks, Donald Trump does not have the authority to unilaterally force us into war.

He may have never read the Constitution, but I have. So let me direct his attention to article I, which makes it clear that the President does not have the power to declare war; only Congress does. We are the ones tasked with deciding when and how Americans are sent into combat. We are the ones charged with that most solemn duty, yet Trump is acting also if article I simply doesn't exist, as if obeying the Constitution is optional, as if our founding document is a yellowing, crumbling piece of paper he can crumble up at will.

Refusing to allow him to get away with this should not—must not—be a partisan issue. No matter if you are struggling to pay rent or your name is plastered in fake gold on a building on

Fifth Avenue, no one can ignore the Constitution. No matter if you are a Mar-a-Lago worker pulling double shifts or the President of the United States, no one is above the law.

Look, I believe there are certain solemn, urgent times when our military must be called upon to defend us. There are certain moments when the threat in question is significant and imminent, instances when military force is the most effective tool at hand and that using it is necessary to protect America and her interests. The thing is, from what little information Trump has shared publicly so far, this is not one of those times.

But if the administration thinks I am wrong, then the floor is theirs. We are only a 20-minute walk from the White House. It is not that hard to find us here. We are the building with the big dome on top. If they actually believe that this war is justified, then they need to come to Congress and do their jobs, explaining their case and giving the American people a say through their elected representatives.

They need to respect the American people enough to actually tell them why they are being forced to bear the costs of this conflict, both in dollars and cents and daughter and sons.

The White House needs to respect our servicemembers enough to prove why war with Iran is worth turning more moms and dads into Gold Star parents. They need to prove that they have thought this through enough, then they can tell us what an end state in Iran would look like.

Then, when their case has been made, when Congress' debate is done, we, in this Chamber, must vote. It is our duty; it is our burden; it is the least we can do for those willing to sacrifice everything to safeguard our democracy.

But if the Trump administration refuses to do that, if they refuse to adhere to the first article of our Constitution, well then it begs the question: What are they hiding?

This week, we will vote on Senator KAINE'S War Powers Resolution, and I am well aware that many of my colleagues are claiming to have a difficult time deciding how to vote. To them, let me say this: We ask a lot of tough things of our troops and military families. Serving in a combat zone is hard. Hugging your husband or your wife, your father or your daughter, for the last time before they deploy, not knowing if you will ever see them again, that is hard. The least we can do here in return is ensure that we Senators take our duties as seriously as our military men and women do theirs.

So to my Republican colleagues: Please, think about the fact that Trump cared so little about your beliefs on this matter that he willfully, illegally circumvented our Chamber entirely, preferring to sow chaos and fear, leaving Americans in a lurch and their elected representatives in the dark, choosing to start an unlawful war rather than simply ask for your exper-

tise for your constitutionally mandated vote.

And think about that Trump still has not been able to tell us of an imminent threat to American interests that would have actually required military action anywhere near this scale. And then after reflecting on all of that, all I am asking is that you vote for what you know is right.

Moving forward, I will come back to the Chamber every afternoon, if necessary, to remind the Nation of the hard lessons learned the last time a President rashly sent our sons and daughters into another unjustified war in the Middle East, trying to ensure that this time we do right by our troops, trying to ensure that this time we actually fully, soberly consider the consequences of Washington's decisions on those who serve and their families.

God bless each and every one of our troops in harm's way right now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Vermont.

WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, we must act. The President has made a decision unilaterally without consultation of Congress to start yet another war in the Middle East. It is a reckless decision that is very detrimental to the well-being of our country and very threatening to the Constitution.

There are three issues that are absolutely essential to consider by this Congress. First of all, No. 1, America does not want this war. And I trust the American people. The reason America does not want this war is they have seen it before. They saw it in Iraq where the justification was weapons of mass destruction. They saw it in Afghanistan where the justification was getting rid of the Taliban. They saw it in Libya where the justification was getting rid of Qadhafi.

In each case—Saddam, Qadhafi, the Taliban—yes, they were evil people doing bad things—but what was a lie to the American people, and they saw, was that there were no weapons of mass destruction. The Taliban is now back in power after 20 years of war, and the chaos that was sown in Libya lives with us to this day.

America understands that it is easy for a President to assert he wants to go to war. He is the Commander in Chief. He can do it, as he has done in this case, by bypassing Congress. But what the American people have seen is that it is easy to start a war, but the consequences and the costs are not avoidable, and they have been very damaging to the well-being of the people of this country; they have been very damaging to our prosperity; and, of course, they have caused immense loss of life of our wonderful soldiers and men and women in uniform. The American people get it.

No. 2, we cannot, under our Constitution, go to war on the basis of a deci-

sion by one man. The whole point in our Constitution of vesting war-making authority in the Congress was because our Founders saw how Kings abused their powers to go to war, how an autocrat abuses his power to unilaterally decide to go to war.

A quote from Abraham Lincoln:

The provision of the Constitution [that is, our Constitution] giving the war-making powers to Congress, was dictated . . . by the following reasons . . . Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This, our Convention understood [Lincoln said] to be the most oppressive of all Kingly oppression and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us.

Yet, in fact, that is exactly what is happening now. One man—Donald Trump—unilaterally decided to start this war. It is the same person, by the way, with—who as candidate Trump decried, and quite rightly, the rush to war. He decried especially wars of regime change as total failures. He decried the \$7 trillion that was spent in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So now, we have a new situation where the President woke up one day, announced he is going to war, and abandoned his America First commitment. What is clear here is this war is not necessary. Iran, the Ayatollah, the regime is a threat. We have been containing that threat. There were negotiations about their nuclear capabilities that were making significant progress. Don't forget that this administration is the one that tore up the agreement in the Obama administration where we had eyes on exactly what was happening in the Iran nuclear program and there was compliance. And we have substituted it with bluster and now, ultimately, this war of choice.

This is a war that has been pushed hard by Prime Minister Netanyahu, who just before the war started was whispering in the ear of Donald Trump, and it is pretty clear that the President was persuaded by Netanyahu. The President should be more persuaded by the voices of the American people who have learned lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan and even going to back to Vietnam.

The third reason Americans don't want this war is they want us in this Congress, in this administration, to focus on the needs of Americans. We have a situation in Vermont now that is similar to what people face all over this country. Healthcare is something that is out of reach for everyday Americans. That is absolutely essential. And you, yourself, and I and others did our level best to try to extend tax credits to working families and farmers and small businesses who depended on them to be able to continue to have healthcare. With the One Big Beautiful Bill, 15 million people are losing Medicaid access.

What we are seeing is the acceleration of income inequality where people