

Liberal Luminaries in Senate Are Swing Votes on Bombing Syria

By [Norman Solomon](#)

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Many senators began this week still uncommitted on whether they'll vote for attacking Syria. Among the fence-sitters are enough "progressives" to swing the Senate's decision one way or the other.

That decision is coming soon — maybe as early as Wednesday — and the Obama White House is now pulling out all the stops to counter public opinion, which remains overwhelmingly against a war resolution. The administration hopes to win big in the Senate and carry momentum into the House, where the bomb-Syria agenda faces a steeper climb.

Some Democratic senators who've cultivated progressive reputations nationwide — Barbara Boxer of California, Dick Durbin of Illinois and Al Franken of Minnesota — haven't hesitated to dive into Obama's war tank. Boxer, Durbin and Franken quickly signed on as carnage bottom-feeders, pledging their adamant support for the U.S. government to attack yet another country.

Other Democrats, like Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Tom Udall of New Mexico, have made clear their intention to vote "no" when the war-on-Syria measure reaches the Senate floor.

But more than a dozen other senators widely viewed as liberal or progressive have held back from committing themselves on how they'll vote. Here's a partial list of those equivocators:

- * Both Massachusetts senators, Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey
- * Both Oregon senators, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley
- * Both Colorado senators, Mark Udall and Michael Bennet
- * Both Washington senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell
- * Ohio senator Sherrod Brown
- * Wisconsin senator Tammy Baldwin
- * Rhode Island senator Sheldon Whitehouse
- * Hawaii senator Mazie Hirono
- * Minnesota senator Amy Klobuchar

If you live in one of those states, or anywhere else in the USA for that matter, you can send a quick email to your senators and representative to [tell them “No Attack on Syria” by clicking here](#).

Perhaps no “undecided” stance from senators is more egregious than the one from Wisconsin’s Tammy Baldwin, who won a hard-fought race that elevated her from the House of Representatives last year on the strength of major progressive support.

Speaking at the annual Fighting Bob Fest in Madison last weekend, Baldwin sparked an angry response to her doubletalk about Syria. A [video of the encounter](#) shows a wooden politician who badly needs reminding of her progressive roots. In a suitably confrontational mode, activists serenaded Wisconsin’s junior senator with a stirring rendition of [“Which side are you on Tammy?”](#)

The symbolism could hardly have been more apt. Senator Baldwin was behind the podium at an event named after “Fighting Bob” La Follette, the senator from Wisconsin who led opposition to U.S. entry into World War One. In a Senate speech, La Follette [denounced](#) those who “inflame the mind of our people into the frenzy of war.”

Which side are you on Tammy... and Elizabeth, Ed, Ron, Jeff, Mark, Michael, Patty, Maria, Sherrod, Sheldon, Mazie, Amy?

Senators who portray themselves as progressive are at crossroads as they decide how to vote on attacking Syria. At this historic moment, with enormous consequences, will they cave in to the presidential juggernaut?

Later this week, senators will vote about launching a war on Syria. We’ve got to let them know — right away — that we are watching very closely. And will not forgive or forget any vote for war on the Senate floor.

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.” Information about the documentary based on the book is at www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org.

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