

New Hampshire: We Won't Send Our Soldiers to Unauthorized Wars

State legislator tells how veterans like himself are working to 'Defend the Guard,' state by state

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From Eastern Europe to East Asia to across the Middle East, the United States is currently positioned on multiple tripwires that could pull our country into a new war the American people do not want.

In 2024, it'll be more important than ever that Washington adheres to sound American principles, the most fundamental of which is the consent of the governed.

The United States Constitution is clear and concise: "The Congress shall have Power...To declare War." That authority does not belong to the president (no matter their party), or the generals, or some unelected committee of unknown, faceless bureaucrats. Only the people's elected representatives assembled in the U.S. Congress can decide whether to bring our nation from a state of peace into a state of war.

And yet, since World War II, their duty has been usurped by the executive branch in the form of the intelligence "community," the military-industrial complex, and the White House.

According to the [Costs of War Project](#) at Brown University, since Joe Biden's inauguration, American soldiers have been in combat and under enemy fire in eight countries: Afghanistan (prior to Biden's delayed withdrawal), Iraq, Syria, Mali, Kenya, Somalia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.

The Global War on Terror has proven that without the support of the citizenry, expressed through their elected representatives, our country cannot continue these endless wars

across the globe.

Like most Americans, my constituents in New Hampshire's Hillsborough District 1 are tired of forever war and permanent overseas occupation. They have no further tolerance for the expenditure of their money, their blood, or their honor in places like Iraq, where I deployed twice as a Marine Corps rifleman.

With a motivation to restore the Founding Fathers' intended separation of powers, I cosponsored [H.B. 229](#), the Defend the Guard Act, in the state legislature. This bill would prohibit the deployment of the New Hampshire National Guard into combat overseas unless Congress has first voted to declare war. Last week, with [bipartisan support](#) from both conservatives and progressives, H.B. 229 passed the New Hampshire House of Representatives in an 187-182 vote.

This bill, which is only an added enforcement mechanism to Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, drew active opposition. In other states where this legislation has been introduced, lawmakers have been made to feel intimidated by men in uniform, mainly senior officials from the Department of Defense who lobbied aggressively against it. The threats are always the same; don't rock the boat, or else.

But our soldiers deserve better than complacency. Defend the Guard will not prevent our National Guard units from participating in overseas training in places like El Salvador — with which New Hampshire has a State Partnership Program — or from fulfilling their domestic tasks like disaster relief in other states. It will only ensure that New Hampshire's National Guardsmen are only sent to fight wars that their representatives have voted for. Isn't that how our republic is meant to work?

For all the opposition's big talk, they were drowned out by the immense grassroots backing for the Defend the Guard Act. I know that many of my colleagues' phones blew up with calls from constituents informing them that they should support this common sense fix to our broken foreign policy.

I'm incredibly proud of the gratitude I've received from Granite Staters for championing this legislation, and for the help of fellow co-sponsors John Potucek, Michael Granger, and Matthew Santonastaso — all of us veterans.

H.B. 229 will now move to the state Senate. Furthermore, more than half the states in the union will have Defend the Guard legislation introduced in their legislative bodies in 2024. In March 2023 the Arizona Senate became the first legislative body to pass this bill.

This measure could potentially keep our National Guardsmen out of an unconstitutional war. Their lives are worth that effort, and our Constitution is worth saving.

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Tom Mannion is a two-time Iraq War veteran, deploying with 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines in 2005 and 2007 as an infantry rifleman. He was elected as a New Hampshire State Representative in 2022 and currently serves on the State-Federal Relations and Veterans

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Featured image: Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers bound for Africa mission, Dec. 2023. (photo by Pennsylvania National Guard)

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