

US Congress Backs America's "Eternal Worldwide War"

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Global Research, May 27, 2011

warisacrime.org 27 May 2011

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Forever War: Liveblogging the Vote on Eternal Worldwide War

On Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives backed eternal worldwide war and imprisonment powers for all future presidents, but blocked any ground troops in Libya (except for the ones already there, since the measure included no consequences for its violation). The House also unanimously created a new national holiday to celebrate the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. It defunded the US Institute for Peace (saving the cost of 5 hours in Afghanistan). And it required that all suspected foreign terrorists be tried by the military and not in courts (unless bullets are put in their heads first).

All in a good day's work.

Here's the play-by-play:

What each of the 152 amendments does: [here](#).

May 26, Thursday, 10:01 a.m. Our state, separated from church, is praying to its Lord. 10:02 a.m. Our state just pledged allegiance to our military.

One minute speeches are underway on assorted random topics, sane and otherwise.

What we can expect coming up today:

The Fund More Wars Act of 2012, also called "Defense Authorization Act" or H.R. 1540 was brought to the floor last night with over 150 amendments permitted for votes. Many were debated and voted up or down. Others were debated and the vote postponed.

Amendment #50 was debated last night and the vote postponed. This is an amendment to strip out of the bill language that would allow presidents virtually unlimited power to launch and continue wars and to imprison people, all without any involvement of the legislative or judicial branches of our government. This is current procedure, as exemplified by the Libya War and by many small secretive military operations. But this language would make it part of our laws, effectively eliminating the War Powers Act, albeit in stark conflict with the Constitution.

Many other amendments are of interest. Among those postponed for votes late last night are:

Amendment #61, which would prevent funds authorized in the Act from being used to deploy, establish, or maintain the presence of Members of the Armed Forces or private security contractors on the ground in Libya unless the purpose of the presence is to rescue a Member of the Armed Forces from imminent danger.

Amendment #60 which would reduce the amount of troops stationed in Europe to 30,000 and would cut overall end strength levels by 10,000 a year over the next five years.

Amendment #56 which would require U.S. ground troops to withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving just those who are involved in small, targeted counter-terrorism operations. The amendment would further require the Secretary of Defense to submit a withdrawal plan to Congress within 60 days of enactment.

10:19 Amendment #110 from Rep. Inslee debated and passed.

10:21 Amendment #111 under consideration. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee speaks as if “our troops are coming home” despite the fact that every amendment that would make that happen is almost guaranteed to fail and would have to get past the Senate and the President. The Amendment would create yet another national day to cheer for militarism, on top of Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Patriots Day, etc., we would now have a national holiday to celebrate in particular the glorious wars of Iraq and Afghanistan “and other” areas. The day would “honor” those who “served” in the armed services (apparently not mercenaries or contractors?). Jackson Lee showed images of their glorious performance. We don’t have to blame soldiers instead of politicians or favor abusing soldiers who have suffered enough in order to oppose this sick sort of celebration. How about a holiday for peace makers? Just one will do.

10:31 Amendment #134 requires competition in military contracts (no No Bid contracts?) but must be pretty weak, as it passed without debate.

10:34 Amendment #141 addresses “behavioral healthcare” in the military. It passed without debate. Unsolicited advice: Stop training people to murder and putting them in danger. No cost. Small guvmint!

10:37 Amendment #148 addresses the crisis created by moving one tentacle of the U.S. Airforce bureaucracy to Alabama instead of Ohio. Rep Turner of Ohio offered the amendment. Rep. Martha Roby from Alabama shockingly made this an amendment with arguments on both sides, preferring quite unpredictably that this particular Office of Death by headquartered in Alabama. Roby was outraged that the Congress would dare to interfere in a decision made by Our Military, which we all know is the First Branch of Government.

While this fight rages, let me provide a little more background on the Forever War law.

Obama has publicly opposed it through an Office of Management and Budget statement, but the popular belief that he has threatened to veto the whole bill if Section 1034 remains is quite a stretch. If this madness cannot be stopped in the House or Senate we should demand a veto, but we should not expect one.

The Republicans are trying to crown Obama king.

This is the worst legislation ever.

Here is Section 1034, which Amendment #50 would delete:

“Congress affirms that- (1) the United States is engaged in an armed conflict with al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated forces and that those entities continue to pose a threat to the United States and its citizens, both domestically and abroad; (2) the President has the authority to use all necessary and appropriate force during the current armed conflict with al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated forces pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note); (3) the current armed conflict includes nations, organization, and persons who- (A) are part of, or are substantially supporting, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners; or (B) have engaged in hostilities or have directly supported hostilities in aid of a nation, organization, or person described in subparagraph (A); and (4) the President’s authority pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note) includes the authority to detain belligerents, including persons described in paragraph (3), until the termination of hostilities.”

10:49 The Ohio v Alabama saga has been postponed.

10:49 Amendment #152 is under consideration. We may not get a holiday for peace, but here’s a chance to defund the never-opposed-a-war U.S. Institute for Peace. The argument here, as on both sides of the Alabama v Ohio spat is financial. While we fund a military that could be cut by 85% and still be the world’s largest, we must not recklessly fund something called “Peace.” This amendment is pushed by Reps. Cravaack and Chaffetz. Even Howard warmonger Berman is arguing against this stupid amendment. (However, if they defund the thing, I would like to see a bill introduced to donate that new giant dove-on-the-roof USIP building next to the Lincoln Memorial to the actual peace movement.) Chaffetz says the military (oh, and the State Department) IS our institute for peace. But he adds parenthetically that if those institutions are not “fighting for peace” then “maybe that’s a discussion we should have.” Rep. John Lewis, like Berman, is citing military commanders as the authorities on the need to keep the USIP around. “Give peace a chance!” Lewis implores. Cravaack says that he clearly wants peace the most because he’s proud of having been in the Navy, but the USIP must go. Rep. Woolsey is speaking well against this amendment. Cravaack now says that the USIP has been around since 1985 and we’ve still had wars. So get rid of it! But his partner already said the military is our force for peace. It’s been around since before 1985, and we still have wars. So get rid of the military! Rep. Keith Ellison calls Cravaack’s comment absurd and ridiculous. Rep. Farr calls this a stupid amendment that sends a message to the world that we want more wars. The USIP costs the same as 5 hours of killing in Afghanistan, he points out.

11:01 The vote on killing the USI of Peace is delayed.

11:02 Amendment #55 – Rep Jim McGovern proposes this amendment on Afghanistan. This is the very weakest conceivable sign of a congressional pulse. This is one of those amendments through which Congress would ask its executive to please come up with a plan of some sort, any sort, to get out of Afghanistan. This doesn’t cut off the funds or set an end

date or anything of the sort. Nor does it impose any penalty on the President if he does not set a goal to get out. Nor does it prevent him setting the goal of getting out in 136 years. Nor does it address the fact that the President has repeatedly and publicly promised a significant start of a withdrawal this July and now backed off on that in the form of leaks from the military to the effect that 2.5 percent of forces (5,000 of 200,000 troops and contractors) will come home. The pointlessness and rhetorical nature of this amendment, its handing of decision-making power to the president, makes it the most likely remotely decent amendment to pass. But passing the Senate and the President is another matter. If by some miracle this passes the House, the Senate will reject it. If not, the President will veto or signing-statement it, without consequence. But I say Vote Yes. Without that, there's no sign of a pulse. Congress is dead when even a rhetorical gesture in the direction of someday doing what two-thirds of Americans want now can't be allowed.

11:11 Rep. Mike Conaway says success is just around the corner in Afghanistan but fragile and reversible. Rep. Randy Forbes says we must "win" in Afghanistan. But this amendment is so weak that Rep. Steny Hoyer is now speaking in support of it. Here's the text of the bill that this amendment is based on. It's so weak that Rep. Nancy Pelosi is now speaking in support of it. Pelosi just claimed that for 7 years Bush had no plan for Afghanistan, but Obama immediately had one and now has one, and therefore we should pass this amendment to require that Obama have a plan.

11:32 Rep. Mac Thornberry says bringing troops home endangers them, and it's important for the world and our enemies to not know whether we will stay in Afghanistan forever or not.

11:34 Vote on Amendment 55 postponed.

11:35 A lot of bad amendments brought up as a block, including, I think, these: 70, 74, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 101, 102, 104, 105. Amendment #70 would make "direct use solar energy" count as a renewable resource for purposes of DOD getting 25% of its energy from such sources in 2025. What is THAT about, "direct" as in the energy that keeps all materials from freezing each day?? Amendment 95 would move Troops to Teachers program from the Dept. of Education to the Dept. of "Defense." What could go wrong there?

11:48 That block of amendments passed.

11: 48 A new block of amendments is under consideration: 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 114, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126. My website mysteriously died around 12:05. Apparently #117 WAS included. Rep. Barbara Lee spoke for it. The block passed. This is an amendment (117) to prevent permanent bases in Afghanistan and Iraq — a measure that has been repeatedly passed and ignored for years now. #108 has no teeth but suggests that congress members learn something about the culture, peoples, politics, history, and geography of places they make war on. #122 limits the \$ spent on military music (much less hated than peace) to \$200 million per year.

12:06 a new block of amendments brought up for a vote: 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147. Amendment #132 would address NORTHCOM, the U.S. military in the United States, to work with state and local "authorities." Work on WHAT?! Amendment #136 would let the Secretary of "Defense" "loan" "equipment" to other nations sort of like he's already been doing with Libya?. Amendment

#139 would require the president to make up a list of places to consider bombing, er, excuse me, a list of “potential safe havens for al Qaeda”.

12:15 That block of amendments passed.

12:16 A new block of amendments: 18, 20, 84, 22, 23, 57, 72, 96, 150, 151, 149. Amendment #18 modified, but the modification not read aloud. The block passed.

12:23 Oh gawd, McKeon says Gates is writing a book.

12:26 Now twenty amendments with votes postponed are each coming up for two-minute votes, following a 15-minute vote on Amendment #38 which would allow “pro-active defense” in all rules of engagement. What could go wrong? #38 passed. (Roll No. 354).

12:50 Now the votes on other amendments.

12:55 Rep. Chellie Pingree just sent out an Email saying she will vote No on the overall bill. She assumes Section 1034 is remaining in, although that vote is yet to come:

“Soon I will cast my vote opposing the National Defense Authorization Act. The vague language in this bill would give any president nearly unlimited power to use military force without Congressional approval against anyone deemed by him to be hostile toward the United States. That’s too much of a blank check and I will oppose this bill when it came to the House floor. If signed into law, this bill essentially allows the use of military force at any time, in any place, against anyone as long as the President claims it’s part of the war on terror. President Obama has not asked for this new authority. This bill also provides \$15 billion in additional funding for the war in Afghanistan. It is a war that costs \$10 million an hour and has cost the lives of over fifteen hundred American men and women. That is too high a price for a war that isn’t making America any safer. We can’t afford the wars we have been fighting and now this new authority has the potential of creating an endless war that would put us further in debt. We need to focus on bringing our troops and the money we spend on war home, not expanding the use of military force. We must choose a path forward that winds down our efforts in Afghanistan and brings our troops home.

12:56 Amendment #? failed. (Roll No. 355)

12:57 Amendment #42 is being voted on. This would allow criminals (from GITMO) to be tried in courts. This failed. (Roll No. 356)

12:59 Amendment #43 is being voted on. This would require all “foreign terrorists” to be tried by the military and not by courts. This passed! (Roll No. 357)

1:04 pm Amendment #47 is being voted on. This failed. (Roll No. 358)

1:08 pm Amendment #48 is being voted on. This passed. (Roll No. 359)

1:12 pm Amendment #49 is being voted on. This would create a national office for Cyberspace. This failed. (Roll No. 360)

1:15 HERE WE GO. Amendment #50 is being voted on now.

1:18 It looks like it’s going to fail.

1:20 It failed 187-234. I'll post the names ASAP. (Roll No. 361)

The argument now is that the godawful House had a close vote, the President opposes the measure and has kindof-sortof threatened a veto. We have a week or so to go after Senators on this.

The HOUSE SUPPORTS FOREVER WAR. This undoes Article I of the U.S. Constitution, as well as the War Powers Act. This shreds the Declaration of Independence and creates single-individual rule over matters of war and justice. I wonder if your newspaper or television will even mention it.

1:23 Amendment #? failed. (Roll No. 362)

1:23 Amendment #54 is being voted on. This failed. (Roll No. 363)

1:28 Amendment #56 is being voted on. This would withdraw most U.S. troops from Afghanistan. This failed, but got 183 Yay votes if I heard correctly. (Roll No. 364).

1:31 An amendment from Rep. Polis is being voted on. Presumably this is Amendment #60 which would cut US troops in Europe to 30,000. This failed and got only 96 Yay votes. (Roll No. 365)

1:35 Now a vote is being held on Conyers' amendment #61 to block the use of foreign ground forces in Libya (something already done by the UN resolution that according to the US Dept of Justice justifies the war).

Damn! This passed with only 5 Nay votes. Now what do they do when it's violated or signing-statemented? (Roll No. 366)

1:39 Amendment #62 is being voted on. It passed. (Roll No. 367)

1:43 Amendment #63 is being voted on. Failed. (Roll No. 368)

1:46 pm Amendment #64. Failed. (Roll No. 369)

ca. 1:50 Amendment #111 (the new national holiday "debated" above) passed unanimously. (Roll No. 370)

1:57 pm Amendment #148 passed. Ohio v Alabama continues. (Roll No. 371)

1:57 Amendment #152 is being voted on. It passed. (Roll No. 372)

2:01 pm Last comes the McGovern amendment debated above that would ask the President for a plan to withdraw from Afghanistan. This failed by a very close vote. (Roll No. 373)

Tell the House now to vote No on the overall bill. Tell the Senate to remove Section 1034 and to reject the whole bill.

Call toll-free 1-888-231-9276.

The "Defense Authorization" bill now before Congress pours \$118 billion into wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, dumps another \$553 billion into the military, impedes nuclear disarmament, expands nuclear energy use, funds "missile defense" in California, revives a

jet engine program the Pentagon doesn't even want, discriminates against gays and lesbians, and prevents transfers out of Guantanamo.

But HR 1540 is the worst bill that ever stood a chance of passing Congress because of Section 1034. This section gives presidents from here on out virtually limitless power to make wars and to lock people in prison. This is the biggest change to our federal government since we created a federal government. This undoes the War Powers Act, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence. And President Obama says he doesn't want these powers.

On Thursday, in a very close vote, the House defeated an amendment that would have removed Section 1034. Next week the Senate must do so.

CONTACT YOUR TWO SENATORS NOW to oppose Section 1034.

Call toll-free 1-888-231-9276.

Or with toll 202-224-3121.

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