



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 16, 2019

AUMF Repeal Bill Named for Walter Jones Introduced

A California congressman has introduced legislation named after the late Representative Walter Jones (R-N.C.; shown) that would repeal the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) passed in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks — a cause that was close to Jones' heart.



On February 6, just four days before [Jones' death](#), Representative John Garamendi (D-Calif.) introduced the [Walter B. Jones Restoring Power to Congress Act](#), a bill that would repeal the AUMF one year after the bill became law. Although Jones was already in hospice care at the time, Garamendi listed him as a cosponsor of the bill, a fitting gesture in light of the fact that, according to [Roll Call](#), "the legislation grew out of Garamendi's work with Jones on the House Armed Services Committee."

The AUMF, passed on September 14, 2001, authorized the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons."

Given the climate of fear at the time, it is hardly surprising that the bill passed nearly unanimously. Only Representative Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) had the courage to vote no, correctly forecasting that the bill would become a "blank check" for presidential war-making.

"Over the past 18 years," reported *Roll Call*, "a single 60-word sentence at the heart of the AUMF has been wielded by three presidents — Bush, Obama and Trump — to justify military action in 14 separate countries, according to the Congressional Research Service."

Moreover, as Garamendi pointed out in a [press release](#), even the war in Afghanistan, which had some connection to 9/11, has metastasized into something far different from what Congress had in mind in 2001, yet the AUMF has never been revisited.

"Congress has a Constitutional responsibility to debate and declare war, and we have abdicated that responsibility for far too long," Garamendi said in his statement.

By granting the President *carte blanche* to intervene in foreign countries, "we've been drawn into conflicts where our normal and appropriate policies concerning the conflict of war are ignored," he told *Roll Call*.

"In particular," the paper wrote, "Garamendi cited U.S. participation in a military campaign led by Saudi Arabia that has starved thousands of children, possibly many more, in Yemen." Jones, who went from a hawk to a dove in 2003 after attending the funeral of a Marine killed in Iraq, a war Jones voted



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to authorize, also opposed U.S. involvement in the Yemen conflict.

As previously noted, Garamendi's bill would repeal the AUMF not immediately but one year after its passage. "We chose one year so that Congress would have sufficient time to thoroughly debate the involvement of our military in various countries of the world," Garamendi told *Roll Call*.

That move may help to assuage fears that the bill would precipitate an immediate pullout of U.S. forces around the world. The last time AUMF repeal was considered — Lee managed to attach it to an appropriations bill in 2018 — it was opposed by the House leadership, which managed to [strike it from the bill before it came to a vote](#). A spokeswoman for then-House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) claimed Lee's amendment "was an irresponsible measure that would have left service members without an authorization to defeat al-Qaeda and ISIS and could have led to the release of prisoners at Guantanamo." With a full year to debate such matters, Congress could enact legislation maintaining those interventions (if any) it deems worthy well before repeal went into effect.

Republicans hardly even considered winding down foreign interventions regardless of the party of the President in power. Garamendi told *Roll Call* he believes "things are different" now that Democrats control the House. Perhaps Democrats, not wanting President Donald Trump to have a free hand in foreign affairs, will try to reclaim Congress' rightful role as arbiter of war and peace. But they will have to contend with a Senate still run by the GOP, and there is one Republican congressman who will not be there to help them make the case to his colleagues: the convert to noninterventionism and champion of Congress' primacy in foreign policy whose name is on Garamendi's bill.

Photo shows Rep. Walter Jones alongside pictures (in a hallway leading to his office) of soldiers from Camp Lejeune killed in this century's foreign interventions: AP Images



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