



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on May 27, 2011

## Rep. Justin Amash Seeks Limits on Presidential War-making

The Amash amendment, supported by 21 conservative Republicans and 166 Democrats, would have removed language that [said](#) "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" as well as those who "have engaged in hostilities or have directly supported hostilities in aid of a nation, organization, or person" that helps al-Qaeda, the Taliban and "associated forces."



Amash [charged](#) that this section of the bill, 1034, "authorizes use of force worldwide, for an indefinite period, against undefined persons who aren't directly associated with al-Qaeda or the Taliban. And unlike the 9/11 authorization, the President says this expansive authority is not needed to capture terrorists and defeat our enemies."

"This monumental legislation will affirmatively and preemptively give the president unprecedented power to launch attacks anywhere in the world, even within the United States," Amash [explained](#), stressing that the "associated forces" in the provision is "an undefined and potentially limitless group. 'Associated forces' don't need to be connected to 9/11. 'Associated forces' don't need to have fought against the United States. 'Associated forces' even may include American citizens." Indeed, Amash continued: "An American citizen who donates to a charity that, unbeknownst to him, financially supports an associated force potentially could be targeted by our country's own military under the new authorization."

Many neo-conservative congressmen have no trouble with the U.S. military targeting U.S. citizens. Representative Allen West (R-Fla.) opposed Amash's amendment, [claiming](#) that "If we allow an amendment such as this to go forward, it would have precluded us from going in and killing the world's No. 1 terrorist, Osama bin Laden. If this amendment passes, we will not be able to go after Al-Awlaki." Anwar Al-Awlaki is a propagandist for the Yemeni-based al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula and a U.S. citizen who has already reportedly been targeted by U.S. drone attacks. As reported by Politico, "Amash countered that bin Laden was killed when the original, narrower language [of the congressional Authorization of Use of Military Force] was in effect." On [his Facebook page](#), Amash referred to his refutation of West, adding: "That was easy."

But the vote wasn't easy for Amash, who lost most of his fellow Republicans in the [vote](#). The 21 Republicans supporting the Amash amendment included those Republicans who are most conservative and who most closely adhere to the restrictions of the U.S. Constitution: Ron Paul of Texas, Walter



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Jones of North Carolina, John Duncan of Tennessee, Tom McClintock of California, and Roscoe Bartlett of Maryland.

Amash had just [testified](#) before the House Foreign Relations Committee May 25 urging congressional action against the Obama administration on the unauthorized Libyan war. "The undeniable conclusion is that the president is breaking the law by continuing the unilateral offensive war against Libya," Amash told committee members. "What Congress cannot do is to continue standing by idly as our constitutional war powers are disregarded. The Founders distributed the decision to go to war between the two political branches to ensure that the decision would be made carefully. The founding generation experienced the hardship of several wars, and they knew war's human and financial costs. They understood that a strong executive, who was already given the title of Commander-in-chief, might flex the country's military strength injudiciously. Giving Congress the essential power to declare war allows heads to cool, alternatives to be considered, and makes certain there is consensus if the country is called to fight. If Congress' authority to declare war has any content, at minimum it must prevent the executive from starting an offensive war without Congress' consent."

{youtube width="480" height="390"}Mu0zmz\_2zss{/youtube}

Noting that there are only three reasons for presidential war making, a congressional declaration of war, a congressional authorization of force, or a sudden attack on the United States during a time Congress cannot meet, Amash stressed that Congress had not authorized an attack against Libya and Libya has not attacked the United States. Amash has sponsored [H.R. 1212](#), a bill that would require "The President shall cease the use of force in, or directed at, the country of Libya by the United States Armed Forces unless a subsequent Act specifically authorizes such use of force."

*Photo: Rep. Justin Amash*



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