



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on January 15, 2026

Republicans Refuse to Rein In Trump's War Powers

Vice President J.D. Vance had to cast a tie-breaking vote on Wednesday to kill a measure that would have empowered Congress to rein in President Trump's war powers.

With Trump seemingly intent on making 2026 a record year of foreign meddling, the Senate gave a good 'ol college try in an attempt to reassert its Constitutional war powers authority. But it was not to be. In the end, Trump bullied two Republicans back into line. The Senate ultimately voted 51-50 to quash a resolution drafted to limit Trump's power in Venezuela, with Vance having to make a trip into the upper chamber.



AP Images

The president lashed out at the initial five Republican defectors before the vote. He said on social media they should never be elected to office again and that the other Republican senators should be ashamed of their colleagues. The White House, with involvement from other Cabinet officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, applied additional pressure.

The Democrats cried crocodile tears. "It's disappointing that my colleagues let the president sort of beat them into submission," Virginia Democrat Tim Kaine said. Kaine co-sponsored the legislation with Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.). But unlike Paul, Kaine likes to reserve his rare bouts of constitutional conviction for when it's politically expedient. Like most Democrats, anything that Trump doesn't like is politically expedient. Kaine's lifetime score on The New American's Freedom Index is a [whopping eight percent](#). Paul's, on the other hand, is [96 percent](#).

Republican Dissension

The Republicans who caved were Senators Josh Hawley of Missouri and Todd Young of Indiana. The White House promised them that Trump would behave, and they believed it. [According](#) to the *Wall Street Journal*:

Young said he had received assurances from administration officials that there are no American troops in Venezuela and was given a commitment from Rubio — in writing, which Young posted publicly — that the administration would come to Congress for formal authorization in advance of any major military operations in Venezuela.

Hawley said he received the same assurances that the administration would not deploy boots on the ground.

Trump also convinced Hawley to retract his vote by making the argument that the resolution would "tie his hands," which, for some reason, was interpreted as a negative outcome. Tying Trump's hands was the point.



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In addition to Paul, the other Republicans who voted in favor of the resolution were Senators Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine. Murkwoski's lifetime Freedom Index score is a [46 percent](#). Like Kaine, she voted against past measures to prevent or remove military involvement in Syria and Niger.

Collins has been in Congress for more than two decades, and she's averaging a [39 percent](#) Freedom Index score. But she's up for re-election this year, and she'll be defending a competitive seat in a blue-leaning state. The suspicion is that her vote is politically motivated as well.

But it's not just more war action in Venezuela that has Congress — and many American citizens — worried. Trump has openly suggested he's thinking about striking Iran again. Good thing the One Big Beautiful Bill allocated piles of money for bombs and missiles.

Iranian Unrest

Iran has been undergoing protests over the nation's rising prices, among other grievances, since December. And Trump has vowed to intervene if the authorities continue to kill protestors. But it's difficult to get an accurate read on the scale and legitimacy of the protests, given that Israeli and American intel agencies are likely on the ground manufacturing some of the unrest and that authorities turned off the internet in the country.

That's not to say Iran's Islamic regime is blameless. They don't exactly have a stellar human-rights track record over there. If you don't believe the mainstream reports, you can ask the refugees who've fled the nation over the last few decades.

The only country in the region who is egging on a U.S. strike on Iran is Israel. Even America's Arab allies, the ones who don't have good relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia included, are pleading with the Trump administration not to attack Iran again. As are Oman and Qatar. They're worried that overthrowing the Iranian regime "would rattle oil markets and ultimately hurt the U.S. economy," [according](#) to a *Wall Street Journal* report. "Most of all, they fear the blowback at home."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Thursday that Trump received some form of assurances that Iran has stopped killing protestors, yet "all options remain on the table."

Former Trump administration official General Michael Flynn (Ret.) suggested [during an interview](#) this week that Trump is being duped into carrying out a disastrous foreign policy so that Republicans lose big in this year's midterm elections.

Presidential Powers

When crafting the U.S. Constitution, the Framers never intended the president to have unilateral power to order war actions. Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution makes the president the commander-in-chief, but it does not give him permission to wage war. Article I, Section 8, clauses 11-14, indicates that Congress raises the armies and approves the wars. Alexander Hamilton bolstered this view. He explained in *The Federalist*, No. 69 the difference in war powers between the U.S. president and the English monarch:

The President is to be the "commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several States, *when called* into the actual service of the United States.... In most of these particulars, the power of the President will resemble equally that of the king of Great Britain and of the governor of New York. The most material points of



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difference are these: First. The President will have only the occasional command of such part of the militia of the nation *as by legislative provision* may be called into the actual service of the Union. The king of Great Britain and the governor of New York have at all times the entire command of all the militia within their several jurisdictions. In this article, therefore, the power of the President would be inferior to that of either the monarch or the governor.

Secondly. The President is to be commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States. In this respect his authority would be nominally the same with that of the king of Great Britain, but in substance much inferior to it. It would amount to nothing more than the supreme command and direction of the military and naval forces, as first General and admiral of the Confederacy; while that of the British king extends to the declaring of war and to the raising and regulating of fleets and armies, all which, by the Constitution under consideration, would appertain to the legislature.”

It's clear the U.S. president was never intended to have the power to single-handedly order war actions. And any strike on another country, boots or no boots on the ground, is an act of war. It was an act of war when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and it would be an act of war if any other country sent bombers into Washington, D.C., hit a few targets, and left. The U.S. president is behaving like a king, and it seems as though Congress has no intention of reining him in.



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