



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 29, 2012

Senator Rand Paul Stands Against Reid's Senate on Iran

On Tuesday, Senator Reid announced on the Senate floor that he wanted to bring up the Johnson-Shelby Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Human Rights Act of 2012, which introduces a new round of sanctions that punish anyone who provides Iran with equipment or any sort of technology that contributes to censorship or the suppression of human rights in Iran. The legislation also asks the Obama administration to develop an Internet freedom strategy for Iran, a provision that observers find ironic considering some of the Internet-inhibiting measures several lawmakers have attempted to impose on the American people.



The bill would ultimately establish the United States' position on preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

Reid had hoped to push the measure through Congress by unanimous consent, meaning there would be no debate or amendments offered on the legislation.

"I'm going to ask consent soon to moving forward on this unanimously reported bill out the Banking Committee. Unfortunately, I have been told that my Republican colleagues will object to moving forward with these new sanctions because they want to offer additional amendments," Reid said on the Senate floor Tuesday morning.

"I have Democrats who want to offer additional amendments also, but we don't have the time to slow down passage of this legislation," he added. "When we put this away, we're not going to be finished with Iran.... But in an effort to get sanctions in place now, Democrats have agreed to streamline the process and refrain from offering their amendments. We can't afford to slow down the process."

Reid almost makes it sound as if debate on a subject that amounts to making hostile acts of war against Iran — at least in economic terms — as major as war is too time-consuming and should be averted. Under his leadership, the bill would have been passed by a simple voice vote if no one objected.

Paul's opposition prevents Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid from pushing the sanctions bill through the Senate swiftly by unanimous consent. While Reid attempted to do so on Tuesday, Paul intervened and blocked the bill, demanding assurances that the measure will not be used to justify military force against Iran.

Paul's [one-sentence amendment](#) reads: "To clarify that nothing in the Act shall be construed as a declaration of war or an authorization of the use of force against Iran or Syria."

"Our Founding Fathers were quite concerned about giving the power to declare war to the Executive," Paul said on the Senate floor. "They were quite concerned that the Executive could become like a king. Before sending our young men and women into combat, we should have a mature and thoughtful debate



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over the ramifications of and over the authorization of war and over the motives of the war," he added.

Senator Paul referenced the steps that led to the conflict in Libya, and pointed out that there were several lawmakers who strongly advocated U.S. military involvement, including John McCain and Lindsey Graham. Paul indicated that Americans are now hearing the same pro-war rhetoric from lawmakers in Washington regarding Iran and Syria.

At the start of the month, Senator McCain [declared](#), "The time has come for a new policy in Syria." On Monday he called for the United States to "lead an international effort to protect key population centers in Syria, especially in the north, through airstrikes on Assad's forces." He admitted that "this will require the United States to suppress enemy air defense in at least part of the country," with the goal of using U.S. airstrikes "to establish and defend safe havens in Syria" where Assad's enemies "can organize and plan their political and military activities."

Similarly, Senator Lindsey Graham [said](#) this of Iran:

The purpose is to tell the Iranians that no matter what you think, America is not divided when it comes to dealing with you. You've been able to do what no one else has been able to accomplish. I don't think they understand how hard it is to bring everybody together in America, but you've been able to do it. Why have you been able to do it? Because of your behavior. Because of the outrageous nature of what you want for your people and the world at large.

Likewise, Senator Lieberman wants to add to the sanctions bill "a resolution about containment being an unacceptable policy."

"Senator Graham and I are the lead sponsors of a bipartisan resolution that says containment is not an acceptable policy against Iran. With regard to the bill coming out of the banking committee, we're having a discussion with Sen. Reid about when to take it up and how many amendments to allow," Lieberman said.

Paul, like his father, is advocating a constitutional approach to war, asserting that at the very least, Congress should engage in a full discussion and debate on the subject before proceeding further.

"Many in this body cannot get boots on ground fast enough in a variety of places, from Syria to Libya to Iran," said Paul. "I urge that we not begin a new war without a full debate, without a vote, without careful consideration of the ramifications of a third or even a fourth war in this past decade."

The *Huffington Post* [seemed](#) to be applauding Senator Paul's stance on the issue:

Before we have a war with Iran, shouldn't the Senate and the House have at least one debate and vote on it? Isn't that what the Constitution demands? Isn't that what is demanded by the War Powers Resolution (which, despite its name, is binding law)?

According to the *Post*, the main proponents of military action are the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, Lieberman, and Graham. The *Post* seems to deny that President Obama is guilty of aggression, asserting, "Some people in Washington want to undercut President Obama ahead of ... talks, restricting his ability to participate in an effective diplomatic process that would de-escalate tensions (and lower gas prices), and some of the Republicans drive for new legislation on Iran is clearly motivated by this."

If the *Post's* writer truly believes this, he is ignorant of the facts or has a short memory span. It was only on Sunday in which President Obama indicated that the time to handle a nuclear Iran diplomatically is closing. "I believe there is a window of time to solve this diplomatically, but that window is closing," the



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President told reporters.

Obama made similar statements one week ago during a press conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron, warning that the opportunity for a diplomatic solution was “shrinking.” At that time, Obama warned Tehran to use the opportunity to engage in diplomatic talks with world leaders in order to avoid “even worse consequences.”

While the President did declare during that press conference that there was still “time and space” for a diplomatic solution rather than a military strike, he stated that the window of opportunity for that was disappearing.

Likewise, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has reportedly asked her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in New York on Monday to tell Tehran that it has a single chance to solve the conflict peacefully by making progress in the talks with the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China, and Germany. Clinton asked that Lavrov make clear that an attack will occur on Iran’s nuclear facilities within months otherwise.

Observers note that it does not take much discernment to detect warmongering in those assertions.

In the meantime, it appears that Reid will not get his way with the sanctions bill. And Paul is not the only member of the Senate who wants to offer an amendment to the legislation, though his appears to be the only amendment offered in order to avoid war at this time. Lieberman and Graham wish to add a resolution that stands opposed to containment, while Republican Senator Mark Kirk wants an amendment to the bill that actually contains even more expanded sanctions against all Iranian banks.

Photo of Rand Paul: AP Images



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