



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on April 3, 2023

Senator Says He'll Keep Holding Up Pentagon Nominees Over Taxpayer-funded Abortion Travel

Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.) vowed Sunday to continue blocking Defense Department promotion nominees until Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin rescinds his recent policy change forcing taxpayers to pay for service members' abortion travel.

"Democrats haven't explained how abortion makes our military stronger or safer," he wrote in a [Wall Street Journal op-ed](#). "The only war they are focused on winning is the culture war."

In February, the Pentagon [announced](#) that it would henceforth cover the costs for service members, their spouses, and their dependents desiring to kill their unborn babies to travel from states that have restricted abortion to ones that have not. In addition, the traveling service members will get paid time off. Both of these expenses, of course, come out of taxpayers' pockets.

"When word of this new policy leaked in December," penned Tuberville, "I warned Pentagon officials that I would block their nominees in the Senate if they went through with it. They did it anyway. I've kept my word and put a hold on their nominees."

Predictably, Democrats such as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) have attacked Tuberville for exercising his prerogative as a senator because it stands in the way of their agenda.

"Senator Schumer and some of the other senators have claimed that my hold on these nominees is unprecedented. Well, it's not. My hold is far from unprecedented," Tuberville [said](#) Wednesday. "In fact, Senator [Michael] Bennet [D-Colo.] himself threatened to do the exact same thing just a few months ago. Why? Because the Air Force planned to move Space Command from Colorado to Huntsville, Alabama.... Two years ago, we had a senator from Illinois put a hold on 1,000 nominees over the promotion of one single officer. So far, my hold has affected 184 nominations."

Tuberville's hold doesn't prevent these promotions from being approved by the Senate. It merely forces senators to vote on each nominee individually rather than approving whole blocks of nominees at once.

But senators are apparently too busy taking vacations to do that. In his op-ed, Tuberville noted that between recesses and other days off, the Senate has been out of session for more than half the year to date.

"Democrats are in a panic about 184 promotions for generals and officers. Yet I have not heard a word from them about the 15,000 enlisted soldiers we're missing right now from last year's recruiting class.



AP Images
Sen. Tommy Tuberville



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That's an entire division. There's another 8,600 who were discharged over the president's vaccine mandate. Kicked out. I don't hear a word about them from the Democrats," said Tuberville. "So, the military is down 23,000 enlisted soldiers due to the actions of the Biden administration and his secretary of defense just this past year. Yet Democrats are worried about 184 generals getting their promotions? Only one of those things threatens our security. It is not the officer promotions."

The conflict between Tuberville and the Biden administration is not simply a matter of differing views of abortion. It's a matter of law. Federal law specifically states that "funds available to the Department of Defense may not be used to perform abortions except where the life of the mother would be endangered if the fetus were carried to term or in a case in which the pregnancy is the result of an act of rape or incest."

During a March 28 House Armed Services Committee hearing, Representative Mike Johnson (R-La.) [took Austin to task](#) over the matter.

"I get that you're trying to find a crafty workaround, but it's a blatant violation," Johnson told Austin.

When Austin protested that paying for abortion travel was "important to our force," Johnson shot back, "What's more important is adherence to the rule of law.... This is a statute that was created by the people's elected representatives, and the last time I checked, not a single person in this country voted for you."

Tuberville, a retired college-football coach, said Wednesday he intends to stand his ground "until hell freezes over."

"I am not going to be intimidated by a campaign of selective outrage," he declared. "I gave the Pentagon fair warning. They chose to go forward with this policy.... This was the Biden administration's choice. I'm keeping my word."



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