



Statement of Support: House Bill 273

To: House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Eric Blitz, Chair, Libertarian Party of Maryland

February 4, 2022

Chair Pendergrass, Vice-Chair Pena-Melnyk, Members of the Committee:

The Libertarian Party of Maryland supports passage of HB 273.

The Defend the Guard legislation is part of a movement in over 40 states to reign in the federal government's practice of using state national guard units in undeclared and unconstitutional wars, the kind of wars that last a generation, have meandering goals and justifications, are entered into under false premises, and cost tens of thousands of lives. They are the kind of wars that continue merely out of inertia, regardless of whether strategic goals are being achieved or the tactics are effective.

Despite engaging in countless armed conflicts, the United States government hasn't declared a war in accordance with its constitutional obligations since 1941. As a result, every war since World War II has been more controversial and less effectively waged. A declaration of war requires political consensus building for the mission, as a check against executive branch overreach and as a means of the people's representatives being heard on the decision. By requiring the votes necessary to pass a declaration of war, you reinstate the Constitution's political accountability for the momentous act of using military force and putting our National Guard members in grave danger.

From that political accountability, legislators are incentivized to go to their constituents to make the case for or against the war. In so doing, important questions are asked and answered before countless lives are put at risk. If the rationale for war is so secretive, politically sensitive, or perhaps ill-conceived that it can't be adequately defended by those advocating for war, a vigorous debate will disclose that and tragic miscalculations can be avoided. Your constituents that serve in the Maryland National Guard deserve to know that when deployed into active combat duty, they are doing so for a mission that has the broad and deep political support necessary to garner a declaration of war from Congress.

One state passing the Defend the Guard Act will help other states to pass similar legislation. Maryland should show leadership on this issue, not be cowed into making their decision merely as a calculation about federal funding. Constitutional principles should matter more to you than federal threats to cut off funding, which are unlikely to

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occur because the federal government relies upon state guard units for localized activities too much for them to follow through with such threats. This should be a nonpartisan effort that focuses on the benefit to all your constituents who serve in state guard units.

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Maryland, I ask for a favorable report from the committee on HB 273.

Sincerely,

/s

Eric Blitz, Chair
Libertarian Party of Maryland