

My name is Dan McKnight and I'm submitting testimony in support of House Bill 220.

I am a thirteen year veteran of the United States military, including service in the United States Marine Corps Reserves, United States Army, and Idaho Army National Guard. From 2005 to 2007 I deployed for an eighteen-month combat deployment in Afghanistan.

In 2019 I founded the non-profit Bring Our Troops Home, a national organization composed of veterans of the Global War on Terror committed to ending our endless wars and restoring the United States Constitution.

For over 70 years, the foreign policy of our nation has been dominated by executive overreach and presidential warmaking, contrary to the intention of our Founding Fathers and the explicit laws of our land.

During the Global War on Terror, where four successive presidents have waged war in more than seven countries in the Middle East and Africa, over 45% of the soldiers deployed into combat were National Guardsmen. These forces subsequently incurred more than 18% of the casualties.

In my own experience, I found the National Guard to be the best trained and most professional of all the military branches I had the honor to serve with. It is and ought to continue to be a well-integrated part of our national defense.

But no member of the National Guard should be sent into combat until members of Congress follow Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution and formally declare war.

Under the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMFs), Congress voted to relinquish their constitutionally-mandated authority to declare war, and have permitted the president of the United States to wage war without territorial, financial, or temporal restraint.

This constitutes an illegal cessation of power from one branch of government to another.

House Bill 220, the Defend the Guard Act, would prohibit the Maryland National Guard from being deployed into these active combat situations unless Congress has first declared war.

This bill would not interfere with the National Guard's duties under Title 10, or prevent their deployment to overseas training missions. But it would act as a mechanism by which the state of Maryland can obligate the federal government to follow what is already federal law. This is how our system of federalism is meant to function.

Through Defend the Guard legislation, states can defend the integrity of their National Guard and disincentivize unconstitutional wars waged by the executive.

I encourage all members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee to vote in favor of House Bill 220.