

July 16, 2020

The Honorable Jim McGovern
Chairman,
House Rules Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member,
House Rules Service Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman McGovern, Ranking Member Cole, and Rules Committee members,

As a bipartisan group of organizations committed to reestablishing Congress' constitutional authority over use of military force, we write to express our strong support for the Spanberger-Cole amendment #415 to the National Defense Authorization Act.

The [Spanberger-Cole amendment](#) prohibits use of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) for sending our military into any country where U.S. forces are not engaged in hostilities at the time of enactment, thus halting the ever-expanding use of this authorization.

Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 of the U.S. Constitution makes clear that the authority to declare war resides with Congress and Congress alone. The 2001 AUMF, passed in the wake of September 11th, has been used by multiple administrations as justification to deploy American servicemembers to dozens of countries, without Congressional approval.

The Spanberger-Cole amendment is a constructive, bipartisan first step in reclaiming Congress' constitutional authority in matters of war and peace. It does not prevent us from defending ourselves or our allies; the president would still retain Article II authority to defend the United States and our allies from imminent threats, as laid out in the War Powers Resolution.

This legislation is an important step toward ending the forever wars. It is part of the equation, together with repeal of the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs, for reclaiming Congress's constitutional role in authorizing use of force. This approach demonstrates strong bipartisan support for a robust debate and further AUMF reforms.

Spanberger-Cole is an incremental step; it does not solve all of our concerns with the overly broad AUMFs. But it is a solid foundation on which to build. We encourage you to rule it in order and support its passage.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter regarding the U.S. Constitution and national security.

Sincerely,

Concerned Veterans for America
Human Rights First
Ploughshares Fund
Project On Government Oversight
R Street
VoteVets

cc: Chairman Adam Smith, House Armed Services Committee
Ranking Member Mac Thornberry, House Armed Services Committee