



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 1, 2026

The Framers Gave Congress the Power to Declare War for a Reason: to Stop America From Becoming a Global Enforcer

President Trump's decision [to attack Iran](#) without congressional approval invited the observation that he should expect a vote in Congress next week, as [The New York Times reported](#), "on resolutions to rein in the president's war powers."

GOP U.S. Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky rightly called the air raid "acts of war unauthorized by Congress," while GOP Senator Rand Paul, also of Kentucky, said he won't support the strikes because they are unconstitutional. Both are backing resolutions to stop the attack.



Declaration of Independence by John Trumbull

Most Democrats on Capitol Hill are reflexively opposing Trump. Most Republicans are reflexively supporting him. And just as it was impertinent [to ask](#) former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democrats where the Constitution authorized the government to force an American to buy health insurance, it appears that asking that same question to most Republicans about the attack on Iran is equally impertinent. And it will likely invite the same sneering answer: "Are you serious?"

As yet another preemptive war is begun in the Middle East, John Quincy Adam's words of wisdom still ring true:

"Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be."

Like most Americans I...

— Rand Paul (@RandPaul) [February 28, 2026](#)

The Framers Were Serious

But Paul and Massie are serious, as were the Framers when they conferred upon Congress in [Article I, Section 8](#) of the Constitution the power "To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water."

Paul helpfully provided lines from John Quincy Adam's speech of July 4, 1821 that explained why the U.S. foreign policy must be humble. And why the military must not be used abroad.

"Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence, has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be," [Adams said](#):

But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the



freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign Independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. The frontlet upon her brow would no longer beam with the ineffable splendor of Freedom and Independence; but in its stead would soon be substituted an Imperial Diadem, flashing in false and tarnished lustre the murky radiance of dominion and power. She might become the dictatress of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.

Paul also provided a line from James Madison, the fourth president and co-author, with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, of *The Federalist Papers*: “The Executive Branch is the branch most prone to war, therefore, the Constitution, with studied care, delegated the war power to the legislature.”

Madison was not alone, as the Committee for the Republic website explains. It reprises not only the words of Madison but also those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton.

Washington: “The Constitution vests the power of declaring war with Congress; therefore no offensive expedition of importance can be undertaken until after they have deliberated on the subject and authorized such a measure.”

Hamilton in *The Federalist*, No. 69: “The President is to be commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States. In this respect his authority would be nominally the same with that of the king of Great Britain, but in direction of the military and naval forces, as first General and admiral of the Confederacy; while that of the British king extends to the DECLARING of war and to the RAISING and REGULATING of fleets and armies, all which, by the Constitution under consideration, would appertain to the legislature.”

Madison: “In no part of the constitution is more wisdom to be found than in the clause which confides the question of war or peace to the legislature, and not to the executive department. Beside the objection to such a mixture of heterogeneous powers: the trust and the temptation would be too great for any one man: not such as nature may offer as the prodigy of many centuries, but such as may be expected in the ordinary successions of magistracy.”

Madison to Jefferson, April 2, 1798: “The constitution supposes, what the History of all Governments demonstrates, that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war, and most prone to it. It has accordingly with studied care vested the question of war in the Legislature.”

Jefferson to Madison, September 6, 1789: “We have already given, in example one effectual check to the Dog of war, by transferring the power of letting him loose from the executive to the Legislative body, from those who are to spend to those who are to pay.”

Jefferson to Congress, 1805: “Congress alone is constitutionally invested with the power of changing our condition from peace to war.”

War Powers and Other Resolutions

The United States has not declared war since 1941 after the Red-agent-controlled [Roosevelt](#)



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[administration pushed](#) Japan to attack the United States. That means the Korean and Vietnam Wars, along with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, were unconstitutional.

In 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution, which permits the president to wage war as long as he notifies Congress within 48 hours. While the act offers a thin veneer of congressional approval for hostilities, it undermines what the framers clearly intended in Article 1 Section 8. And it simply ignored what they clearly explained in giving *Congress* the power to declare war *before* the president begins one on his own.

With 83 Democrat cosponsors, in June [Massie introduced](#) a concurrent resolution, which notes that only Congress can declare war, and that the president must obey the War Powers Resolution. As he did with the Epstein Files, [he plans](#) to join forces with far-left Democrat Ro Khanna of California to push measure that would end the attacks.

I am opposed to this War.

This is not “America First.”

When Congress reconvenes, I will work with [@RepRoKhanna](#) to force a Congressional vote on war with Iran.

The Constitution requires a vote, and your Representative needs to be on record as opposing or supporting this war.

— Thomas Massie (@RepThomasMassie) [February 28, 2026](#)

Massie’s measure “directs the President to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran or any part of its government or military, unless explicitly authorized by a declaration of war or specific authorization for use of military force against Iran.” Likewise, [Paul was the lone Republican](#) to join Democrats in the Senate on a bill to block war with Iran. Even if those measures pass both houses of Congress, the [Times observed](#), they will fail because proponents don’t have the votes to override Trump’s certain veto.

Every major presidential campaign is based on lies and knowingly false promises, but Trump made opposition to regime-change wars a central part of his political identity for a decade. His voters believed it.

He's proven himself one of the most deceitful frauds in US history.[]
<https://t.co/3SGWIRWAV6>

— Glenn Greenwald (@ggreenwald) [March 1, 2026](#)

Broken Promises

Granted, some critics of Trump are right. His oft-repeated America First campaign promise of no more foreign wars, and his campaign meme that a vote for Trump was a vote for peace, appears to have been false and have undermined his MAGA movement. It will end in disaster for the GOP in the 2026 midterm elections. The broken vow inspired leftist Glenn Greenwald to call Trump “one of the most



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deceitful frauds in US history.”

Maybe. But far more troubling is his and Congress’ ignoring the primordial law of the land, the Constitution, just as presidents and Congress have since the Korean War began. For its framers gave Congress the power to declare war for good reason: to prevent the global military imperialism that John Quincy Adams rightly predicted would make America the “dictatress of the world.”

Trump was elected to stop that. He hasn’t and apparently won’t. It appears that Americans are getting a lesson in the triumph of hope over experience.



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