



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 22, 2026

## House GOP Pulls Iran Vote as Congress Keeps Running From Its War Power

Neither Democrats nor Republicans appear serious about forcing Congress to reclaim its war power.

That is the ugly history of the Iran war powers fight. For weeks, leaders in both parties treated Congress's authority over war like a scheduling problem, not a constitutional duty. Democrats hesitated when the votes appeared to be coming together. Then Republicans killed the vote when it looked ready to succeed.

This week, House Republican leadership made the evasion impossible to miss. Just as a resolution to force President Donald Trump to end his unauthorized Iran campaign appeared to have enough support to pass, GOP leaders pulled it. Not once, but twice.



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[The resolution](#), introduced by Representative Gregory Meeks of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, would require Trump to end unauthorized military action against Iran unless Congress approves it. It came after nearly three months of war, rising gas prices, growing public opposition, and widening unease on Capitol Hill.

### Democrats' Delay

The latest cancellation did not come out of nowhere.

In late March, progressive critics accused Democratic leaders of slow-walking the same fight. Punchbowl News [reported](#) that House lawmakers had abandoned plans to vote that week on Meeks's Iran war powers resolution. A two-week recess was approaching. That delay pushed any possible vote into mid-April.

Common Dreams [quoted](#) Demand Progress warning that Democratic leaders were "wavering" even as reports suggested the resolution might have enough votes to pass.

A previous war-powers [measure](#), co-led by Representatives Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) and Ro Khana (D-Calif.), had failed shortly after the war began when four Democrats, Henry Cuellar of Texas, Jared Golden of Maine, Greg Landsman of Ohio, and Juan Vargas of California, joined most Republicans to defeat it.

Within a few weeks, pressure appeared to be moving most of them toward supporting a new resolution. That made delay harder to defend.

Meeks's office rejected claims that he was sabotaging his own effort, claiming Meeks was "whipping a vote precisely so it passes, and any accusations to the contrary are absurd."



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Still, the criticism landed. Cavan Kharrazian of Demand Progress warned, “Each day we delay increases the risk of deeper U.S. involvement and more lives lost.”

## The Vote Kept Getting Closer

Democrats moved to regrouped around Meeks’s version. By mid-April, he was [defending](#) the measure on constitutional grounds, saying, in part,

The Constitution grants Congress, not the president, the power to declare war. Don’t take my word for it, even the president acknowledged this saying, quote, “As a war, you’re supposed to get approval from Congress.”

Then came the May 14 vote. The House deadlocked, [212 to 212](#). Three Republicans, Thomas Massie, Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, and Tom Barrett of Michigan, joined Democrats in support. Jared Golden of Maine was the only Democrat to oppose it.

That tie changed the story.

The resolution was no longer symbolic. It was within reach. The defecting Republicans proved the issue could split Trump’s party. Golden’s later shift suggested Democrats could close their own gap. What had started as a protest vote had become a real threat to the president’s unchecked action.

## The Senate Cracked Next

The Senate added more pressure.

On May 19, the Senate [advanced](#) a similar resolution to curb Trump’s Iran war powers, marking the first time the chamber moved such a measure forward after seven failed attempts. Four Republicans joined Democrats. One Democrat, John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, voted “Nay.”

The vote did not end the war. But it showed that opposition to Trump’s Iran campaign had crossed chambers and party lines.

That made the next House vote dangerous for Republican leaders, whose loyalty to the president appeared to outweigh their loyalty to the Constitution.

Golden had [indicated](#) he would support the measure next time. Fitzpatrick said he planned to vote for it. Barrett had voted for the previous resolution and was a [plausible](#) Republican yes. With Republican absences, a resolution that had failed by a tie could now pass.

And then GOP leaders canceled the vote, first on Wednesday and then again on Thursday, handing Democrats a political gift born of their own shameful retreat.

## Democrats Take the Opening

Democrats had a field day blasting their colleagues “across the aisle.” How could they not? After all, Republican leaders had just turned a war-power vote into a public confession of weakness.

Meeks [said](#) the House was ready to tell Trump “it’s time to end this deeply unpopular war of choice in Iran.” Then he accused Republicans of pulling the vote because they knew they were going to lose.

“They know this war is a political and strategic disaster,” Meeks said. He added,

They know that as Americans head into Memorial Day weekend paying over 4.50 a gallon at the pump, they cannot go home and explain they voted to keep this war going. So instead of



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casting that vote, they ran from it.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.), Whip Katherine Clark (D-Mass.), and Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar (D-Calif.) said the Republican-controlled House continued to act like a “wholly-owned subsidiary of the Trump administration.” They continued,

Republicans cowardly pulled a scheduled vote on a War Powers Resolution — legislation that would have passed with bipartisan support and required the President to end the conflict in the Middle East.

Republicans offered a cleaner-sounding defense, at least when they offered one at all. CBS News [reported](#),

House Republican Leader Steve Scalise told reporters Thursday’s vote was delayed to give lawmakers who were absent a chance to vote. House Speaker Mike Johnson did not answer questions from reporters as he exited the House chamber.

That sounded procedural. But it also conceded the point: Leadership cared about the vote count because the result was in doubt.

## **Congress Cannot Outsource War**

The argument over Iran war does not need to be complicated.

If Trump believes the war is necessary, he should ask Congress to authorize it. Lawmakers who support the war should make their case openly and vote to authorize it. Lawmakers who oppose it should make their case just as plainly and vote to end it. That is not a partisan exercise. It is how a republic prevents war from becoming one man’s private project.

As *The New American* [noted](#) in the latest print issue of the magazine,

It should go without saying that America’s Founding Fathers did not believe that a single person should be entrusted with the power to decide when to plunge the country into the crucible of war. In fact, when they wrote the Constitution, they assigned the lion’s share of war powers to Congress.

The Constitution made the president commander-in-chief, but it gave Congress the power “to declare war.” James Madison warned that the executive is the branch “most interested in war, and most prone to it,” which is why the Constitution vested the war question in the legislature.

That is why another canceled vote is not neutral. It is a choice.

Congress can authorize or reject force. It can demand limits. It can cut funding. What it cannot honestly do is hide behind the president while pretending to honor the Constitution.

The president keeps the war because Congress keeps laundering it through inaction.



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