

National Legislative Division Weekly

BEFORE ANY U.S. TROOPS ARE SENT TO UKRAINE, SOME IN CONGRESS WANT A SAY



U.S. Reps. Peter DeFazio of Oregon, a Democrat, and Warren Davidson of Ohio, a Republican, are leading a broad, bipartisan coalition of lawmakers urging the president to not send U.S. troops into Ukraine, or declare war, before receiving authorization from Congress. President Joe Biden has not dispatched troops to Ukraine following Russia’s invasion and has said he does not intend to do so, but on Tuesday announced sanctions on Russia, as well as on its oligarchs. Biden also said he would move U.S. forces and equipment already in Europe to the three Baltic states — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In a Tuesday letter to Biden, the House members cited Article I in the Constitution that gives Congress the power to finance and declare war, along with Article II that names the president as commander-in-chief. They noted that “the War Powers Resolution of 1973 was passed into law after multiple presidential administrations failed to receive congressional approval for over a decade of unauthorized involvement by U.S. Armed Forces in hostilities in Southeast Asia.”

The Democratic and Republican lawmakers acknowledged there’s no intention now to place U.S. troops in Ukraine.

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“However, if the ongoing situation compels you to introduce the brave men and women of our military into Ukraine, their lives would inherently be put at risk if Russia chooses to invade,” lawmakers said in the letter. “Therefore, we ask that your decisions comport with the Constitution and our nation’s laws by consulting with Congress to receive authorization before any such deployment.”

DeFazio said in a statement that the letter is meant to reaffirm the War Powers Resolution, which “states that Congressional authorization is required before the ‘introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.’”

“Should your administration seek to introduce U.S. Armed Forces into hostilities or decline to remove any U.S. military personnel currently deployed inside Ukraine from unauthorized hostilities or imminent hostilities, Congress stands ready to deliberate over the potentially monumental implications of such scenarios,” according to the letter.

“The American people, through their representatives in Congress, deserve to have a say before U.S. troops are placed in harm’s way or the U.S. becomes involved in yet another foreign conflict,” lawmakers wrote. Bipartisan members of Congress banded together on Tuesday to urge Biden to place tough sanctions on Russia, though some Republicans remained highly critical of Biden.

Russia’s President Vladimir Putin on Monday directed troops to begin moving into two areas within eastern Ukraine, the Luhansk People’s Republic and the Donetsk People’s Republic. Thursday evening, Russian forces launch a full-scale assault on Ukraine, with its military attacking the country from the north, east and south.

Nearly 50 lawmakers signed the DeFazio-Davidson letter, including Democrat Cori Bush of Missouri, Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, Raúl Grijalva of Arizona, Darren Soto of Florida, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Earl Blumenauer of Oregon and Mark Pocan and Gwen Moore of Wisconsin, along with Republicans Matt Gaetz, Bill Posey and Kat Cammack of Florida, Matt Rosendale of Montana, Yvette Herrell of New Mexico, Andy Biggs, David Schweikert and Paul Gosar of Arizona, Peter Meijer of Michigan, Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska and Ben Cline and Morgan Griffith of Virginia, among others.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

- On Tuesday, March 1st, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) will hold a hearing titled, “Hearings to examine global security challenges and strategy.”
- On Tuesday, March 1st, the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committees will hold a hearing titled, “Legislative Presentation of the Disabled American Veterans.”
- On Wednesday, March 2nd, the House and Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committees will hold a hearing titled, “Legislative Presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Multi VSOs: IAVA, WWP, VVA, AMVETS, NCHV, SWAN, BVA, BVEC, NASDVA.”

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MEETINGS

- National Legislative Division Staff continues preparations for the upcoming Washington Conference.
- On Tuesday, February 22, NLD Staff attended a briefing held by House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) Chairman Takano (D-CA) with toxic-exposed veterans to discuss the human impact of toxic exposure and the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2021.
- On Wednesday, February 23, NLD Staff participated in a VSO meeting to discuss the revisions to the PACT Act and other toxic exposure legislation.
- On Wednesday, February 23, NLD Staff met with the office of Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) to discuss a TAL legislative proposal to expand a VA Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) federal contracting program to DOD.
- On Thursday, February 24, NLD Staff met with HVAC professional staff to discuss the logistics of the upcoming hearing where the Commander will be testifying.
- On Thursday, February 24, NLD Staff met with the office of Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL) to discuss a TAL legislative proposal to expand a VA Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) federal contracting program to DOD.

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