

July 20, 2021

Senator Mike Lee  
361A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Chris Murphy  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Bernie Sanders  
332 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Lee, Murphy, and Sanders:

We, the undersigned organizations, focused variously on war powers, emergency powers, the constitutional separation of powers, human rights and civil liberties, and arms transfers, write to express our strong support for the National Security Powers Act of 2021 (NSPA). The NSPA presents an opportunity for Congress to enact the most important recalibration of the balance of power between the President and Congress in decades. We thank you for recognizing the need for this important piece of legislation.

The system of checks and balances enshrined in the Constitution is broken. The nation finds itself in an era of government in which the executive can sell weapons indiscriminately, make war and use lethal force unilaterally, and declare emergencies in perpetuity. The misuse of this authority can have disastrous consequences for Americans and people around the world.

In recognition of this problem, many of us released a [statement](#) to show our commitment to the principles outlined below and have been working towards structural reforms to restore the balance of national security powers between the president and Congress. These principles are now reflected in the NSPA:

- Military interventions, emergency declarations, and arms sales are areas where the President may act only with authorization or approval from Congress.
- In genuine emergencies where Congress has no time to act, the President may proceed without congressional approval—but only for a limited period of time.
- These national security powers must be used for clearly defined purposes, subject to regular review by Congress, and only as a last resort.

As organizations with a wide range of perspectives from across the political spectrum, including expertise in preventing conflict, safeguarding and strengthening democratic institutions, and protecting and promoting rights, we believe that the reforms outlined in the NSPA are critical to preventing future abuses of power that could threaten peace and prosperity and be disastrous for democracy in the United States.

We are grateful for your leadership and are committed to working with you to pursue these important reforms.

Sincerely,

Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)  
Center for International Policy  
Common Defense  
Concerned Veterans for Americans  
Demand Progress  
Foreign Policy for America  
FreedomWorks  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
International Crisis Group  
Indivisible  
Niskanen Center  
Open Society Policy Center  
Oxfam America  
Project on Government Oversight  
Protect Democracy  
Public Citizen  
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft  
R Street Institute  
VoteVets  
Win Without War