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Nullify Unconstitutional Wars With Tennessee Bills HB 129 and SB 156

Members of the Tennessee General Assembly are seeking to enact legislation nullifying unconstitutional federal deployments of the Tennessee National Guard.

House Bill 129 (HB 129) is sponsored by Representative Michele Reneau (R-Signal Mountain) and 11 other representatives, while Senate Bill 156 (SB 156) is sponsored by Senator Joey Hensley (R-Hohenwald). ***HB 129 and SB 156 would prevent combat deployments of the Tennessee National Guard by the federal government in the absence of a congressional declaration of war or another constitutional reason in accordance with Article I, Section 8, Clauses 11 and 15, of the U.S. Constitution.***

According to the Tenth Amendment Center, more than 1.1 million National Guard troops may have been sent to foreign conflicts since 2001, and 45 percent of the total U.S. forces sent to Iraq and Afghanistan have been National Guard or Reserve troops. If Tennessee and other states prohibit unconstitutional National Guard deployments, the federal government's participation in these foreign conflicts would be severely hampered, therefore limiting the federal government's ability to further entangle the U.S. in any undeclared wars overseas.

Such a limitation on the federal government's ability to carry out an internationalist and interventionist foreign policy would be consistent with the wisdom of the Founding Fathers. In his 1796 Farewell Address, President George Washington affirmed, "It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world." President Thomas Jefferson reiterated the same policy in his first inaugural address, advocating for "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."

Importance

HB 129 and SB 156 are an excellent application of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, which states "[t]his Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof … shall be the supreme Law of the Land."

Since the federal government's engagement in endless, undeclared wars — subversion going back decades — violates the U.S. Constitution, it cannot be considered "in Pursuance thereof" and, thus, is not "the supreme Law of the Land." Unfortunately, over the last several decades, thousands of unconstitutional laws on the federal, state, and even local levels have been created and enforced.

Because of this, state legislatures have a duty to rein in unconstitutional wars and robustly enforce the Constitution and only those laws and actions "in Pursuance thereof." HB 129 and SB 156 are an excellent model for other states to follow.

Urge your state representative and senator to support HB 129 and SB 156, and to push back against all other unconstitutional laws at every level of government.

How States Can Rein in Unconstitutional Wars