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Nullify Unconstitutional Wars With Vermont Bill H.355

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

House Bill 355 (H.355), titled the "Vermont Defend the Guard Act," is sponsored by Representative Troy Headrick (P/D-Burlington). This bill would prevent combat deployments of the Vermont 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 Vermont 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

H.355 is 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." H.355 is an excellent model for other states to follow.

Urge your state representatives and senator to support H.355 and to push back against all other unconstitutional laws at every level of government.

How States Can Rein in Unconstitutional Wars