

## Enact 'Defend the Guard' legislation

By Janice McGeachin

President George Washington was unambiguous, "It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world."



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President Jefferson was equally explicit, "Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none." President Monroe formalized that policy. The Mon-

roe Doctrine's first point stated the U.S. wouldn't interfere in the internal affairs or wars of other nations.

Sadly, we've abandoned the founders' intentions, engaging in a series of undeclared wars the last 75 years at great cost of lives and treasure, forgetting Ben Franklin's wise counsel, "There never was a good war or a bad peace."

Today, in the 19th year of an undeclared war, Afghanistan has cost us thousands of lives, tens of thousands wounded, and \$1 trillion. The broader "war on terror," including the undeclared war in Iraq, totals \$7 trillion.

Why are we losing trillions of dollars and thousands of lives in foreign conflicts? Because Congress refuses to follow the Constitution and — if these conflicts truly require our involvement — declare war before committing American troops.

Section 8 of the Constitution makes clear: Only "Congress shall have the power to declare war."

So what's the purpose of declaring war? More than just a piece of paper. Declaring war puts another country or faction on notice, changing the relationship between the citizens and governments of countries involved. Historically, for example, letters of marque and reprisal allowed actions considered

naval piracy during peace to become legal under declaration of war.

Words have meaning, and ignoring them has results: 230 years after ratifying our Constitution, the U.S. has gone from having no standing army to more military spending than the next seven highest-spending countries combined.

Attempting to be the world's police force comes at a staggering cost, compounded year after year. This year's federal deficit was \$1 trillion despite record tax collections. Even if you have no moral issue with policing the world, American taxpayers simply can't afford it. We're tired of the death and destruction stretching us to the breaking point, with a record-high national debt of \$23 trillion.

A poll by Concerned Veterans for America found 60 percent of veterans and military families support removing troops from Afghanistan. A Politico poll found 81 percent of Trump voters in particular support withdrawal, and Pew Research found 59 percent of adults and 58 percent of veterans said it wasn't worth fighting there in the first place. Even higher numbers agreed regarding Iraq.

As former Congressman Ron Paul wrote in his book, "Freedom Under Siege," "Carelessly entering into conflicts jeopardizes our liberty. It does not protect it. Intervention abroad causes us to neglect our obligations at home. The moral and constitutional obligations of our representatives in Washington are to protect our liberty, not coddle the world, precipitating no-win wars, while bringing bankruptcy and economic turmoil to our people."

And as President Donald Trump said in his 2019 State of the Union address, "Great nations do not fight endless wars. ...After two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace."

I agree. I support our troops. I salute their commitment and heroism.

What I cannot support are unconstitutional, undeclared wars that force our troops to fight and die in foreign lands.

Congress has a duty and obligation to decide when war is necessary and when it's not, but they've refused to declare war or to exercise responsible oversight of our military.

To abdicate this vital responsibility to the executive branch is a dereliction of duty.

But we have a duty and opportunity to act here at home as well.

Recently, the Idaho Republican Party's state central committee adopted resolutions urging our congressional delegation to support President Trump's efforts to end what he called "these ridiculous endless wars" and bring our troops home.

As lieutenant governor, I support efforts by Rep. Tammy Nichols — backed by former Idaho National Guard Sgt. Dan McKnight and BringOurTroopsHome.US — to enact "Defend the Guard" legislation requiring that Idaho's guard personnel shall not be activated for combat duty overseas unless Congress has first declared war.

In November, I chaired a meeting of state legislators in Washington, D.C., who plans to introduce similar legislation in multiple states.

It's time to leave Afghanistan and Iraq and stop engaging in undeclared wars and attempts to police the world.

We shouldn't sacrifice American lives intervening in the conflicts of other nations, and we can't afford it.

Congress should do their job, end these undeclared wars and bring our troops home.

*This column was written by Idaho Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin.*