



Bill Aims To Require Congressional Declaration of War Before Calling Up Wyoming Guardsmen

By CATHERINE WHEELER



A northeast Wyoming lawmaker is proposing a bill that would require U.S. Congress to formally declare war before the Wyoming National Guard can be called up.

The Defend the Guard Act, or House Bill 98, says that members of the Wyoming National Guard could not be sent to an active duty combat zone without a declaration of war or official action from U.S. Congress.

Sundance Rep. Tyler Lindholm proposed the bill and is a U.S. Navy veteran. He said he believes the wars in much of the Middle East do not have any clear direction.

"I think this is a great way for the states to stand up and hold Con-

gress accountable. If we are going to charge our National Guard with the responsibility of putting on their boots and defending our country, then Congress should at least take the responsibility of voting to declare war," Lindholm said.

Cheyenne Sen. Stephan Pappas, who is a retired US Air Force Brigadier General, said he does not support the bill because the federal government financially supports the state's national guard. He added a bill like this could have repercussions from the federal government.

"From my perspective...I know how things work between the military and the political and civilian sides, should we pass a bill of this nature, it's going to put Wyoming in a bad light with all the federal military agencies that we do business with. And frankly I think that's not in our best interest," Pappas said.

Pappas said he also questions the legality of the proposed law.

Lindholm said while he has received support from veterans on the bill, he welcomes the criticism, especially from his legislative colleagues. "I fully expect I'm going to have some push back on this deal... but at least we're going to have the conversation. I don't know that Wyoming has ever has this conversation or anything like it in regards to

foreign policy," he said.

Lawmakers in other states are putting forth similar legislation. Lindholm said he hopes the bills push Congress to bring troops back from abroad or establish a clear mission.

"There's no mission for them to accomplish. It's everything from this week, go get some intelligence on what's happening on that ridge over there, to handing out coats. There's no actual goal for an end in sight," he said.

Lindholm also heads the Wyoming chapter of Bring Our Troops Home, a national organization of veterans that looks to end current U.S. military involvement in the Middle East.

Lindholm said there will be a rally in support of the bill at Wyoming State Capitol on Feb. 14, which will feature an appearance from Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul.

"I think it's an important conversation to have, the fact that we have a member of Congress that's going to show up and talk about the state's stepping forward and flexing their muscle in this regard," he said.

As the bill makes its way through the legislature, Lindholm said veterans will be coming to the Capitol to lobby for the bill as well as the Bring Our Troops Home cause.