

Congresswoman Lee Introduces Bill to Repeal the Authorization to Use Military Force

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Congresswoman Barbara Lee, like Jeanette Rankin before her, bravely stood alone in Congress against a vote for war, the vote in 2001 for the so-called Authorization to Use Military Force, a Constitutionally dubious passing of the war decision buck to President Bush and his successors. A majority of Americans now believes that the Afghanistan War that followed that authorization never should have been begun and should, in fact, be ended. So, the Congresswoman, along with initial cosponsors Jones, Woolsey, Grijalva, Conyers, and Honda, is offering us a second chance, a chance to get our response to 9-11 right, to restore war powers to the Congress, and to impose the will of the people on that body.

Congresswoman Lee has sent her colleagues this letter, which we should each send them ourselves by email, fax, phone, carrier pigeon, and by nailing it to their cathedral doors:

“Dear Colleague:

“Please join me as an original cosponsor of the ‘Repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Act of 2011.’ This legislation repeals the joint resolution providing overly-broad authorization to the President to use all necessary and appropriate force against those involved in attacking our nation and to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States.

“This broad authorization of force has had far-reaching implications which shake the very foundations of our great nation and democracy. It has been used to justify warrantless surveillance and wiretapping activities, indefinite detention practices that fly in the face of our constitutional values, extrajudicial targeted-killing operations, and an ever-growing and indefinite pursuit of an ill-defined enemy abroad.

“We must repeal this authorization for use of military force, end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and re-focus our energy and efforts into those actions which truly improve our national security, including developing emerging economies and diplomatic efforts. Please join me as an original cosponsor of this legislation to remove this overly-broad blank check for war anytime, anywhere.

“For more information or to cosponsor this measure, please contact Teddy Miller in my office at teddy.miller@mail.house.gov or 5.2661.

“Sincerely,

Barbara Lee

Member of Congress”

The legislation itself is shorter than the above letter, powerful in its simplicity, approaching in fact the populist wisdom of the long-forgotten Kellogg-Briand Pact, and offering far more than a technical readjustment within a government rotten to its core. At the risk of revitalizing the utterly discredited and poisonous notions of hope and change, I would

suggest that this bill offers the nearest possible approximation of the time-altering repeal, not of a law, but of the past decade of collective insanity and self-righteous mass-murder. Read this carefully:

To repeal Public Law 107-40.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. LEE of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To repeal Public Law 107-40.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force".

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL FINDING.

Congress finds that the Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note), signed into law on September 18, 2001, has been used to justify a broad and open-ended authorization for the use of military force and such an interpretation is inconsistent with the authority of Congress to declare war and make all laws for executing powers vested by the Constitution in the Government of the United States.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF PUBLIC LAW 107-40.

Effective 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note) is hereby repealed.

The AUMF is to be repealed here for two reasons: because Congress is Constitutionally bound to decide matters of war and cannot legally hand off that responsibility to its executive, and because Congresswoman Lee's tearful predictions when she stood alone against this madness a decade ago, and was subsequently obliged to hire security protection, have been proved right; the Authorization has been used and abused to an ever greater extent as an aggrandizement of executive power and a justification for the erosion of our civil liberties. This proposal comes on the heels of a successful public push by RootsAction.org, the ACLU, and others to strip out of the 2012 Defense Authorization Act language that would have radically expanded, rather than repealed, the 2001 AUMF.

Of course, the sponsorship of this proposal by a handful of Congress Members, any number of them capable of losing their spine at the command of their parties' leaders, does not suggest the likelihood of quick passage. But it does give a somewhat floundering peace movement a point around which to rally, educate, organize, and pressure. Rather than joining Congressional progressives in lobbying the 12-member Super Congress, even for top priorities like ending the wars and moving the money to human needs, rather than focusing purely on appealing to an all-powerful president to end particular wars (important as that is), we have an opportunity here to shift the country away from both the idea of presidential war making and the idea, recognized now even by the *Washington Post*, of war without end, war as normality, with peace having become the state of affairs requiring particular justification.

As popular movements begin to bring nonviolent resistance to Washington, D.C., including this October (<http://october2011.org>) perhaps one appropriate measure would be the

shutting down of the congressional offices of each member who has not yet joined the good Congresswoman from Oakland on this bill — a step I'm sure she would never recommend to us and which it is not her role to recommend to us, but a step which morality requires of us as clearly as the blood of our innocent victims is crying out from continents day after day.

David Swanson is the author of "War Is A Lie"

<http://rootsaction.org>

<http://warisacrime.org>

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