Senator Peter Welch
Remarks as Delivered
on Iran War Powers Resolution and Incompetence of DOD Secretary Hegseth
November 19, 2026

Mr. President, the illegal war in Iran must end. This has been a catastrophic, unilateral decision by the President of the United States to plunge us into a war. What he's done has broken a promise he made to the American people when he ran for president: to make certain it was 'America First,' not 'America in forever wars in the Middle East.' That's what this war is.

The decision he made—without consultation or approval from Congress, without consultation or attention to advice even from within his own administration—about the folly of a bombing campaign without any awareness or appreciation that this would directly cause the closing of the Strait of Hormuz, would directly lead to astronomical diesel prices, fertilizer prices that are hitting every American—particularly our farmers—is a catastrophic decision by the president.

And there's no plan from the administration other than to keep doing what they're doing—which is nothing. They're helping to stop the flow of oil in the Strait of Hormuz at great expense to the American taxpayer and to the American public.

Second, this war is now something that is grinding on. It is having immediate and very significant economic impacts on every single American. But it is also a price that's being paid by our troops, and I was shocked that last week, the president, in an interview, said that America hasn't lost a soldier in the last five months of the war in Iran.

Every single day, the president and all of us, should be asking ourselves what justifies the sacrifice that's being expected of men and women in the military. To deny that we've lost any lives in the past five months—when that is totally false—is a terrible indictment of the casual attitude the president has about the consequences of this war on the men and women in the military.

I want to honor those brave men and women. We've lost 23 brave men and women during this war, including nine in the past five months that President Trump wouldn't even acknowledge. I'd like to acknowledge each one of them here on the

Senate Floor: Commander Gabriel Edwards of Oregon, age 42. Private Isabella Gonzales of Texas, age 19. Sergeant Angel Sarah Rampersad of New York, age 28. Lieutenant Tyler James Feehan of Hawaii, age 25. Sergeant Michael Emmanuel Swinton of North Carolina, age 30. Petty Officer First Class Sarai Ramirez-Galvan of Texas, age 29. [Major Bianca Wilkerson of Virginia, age 37.]

The identities, Mr. President, of two additional servicemembers who died haven't been yet released to the public by the Pentagon. But I know you, and I know every member of the United States Senate, wants never to forget, and always acknowledge the sacrifice that those men and women made—their answer to the call of duty. And those families, on this Thanksgiving holiday, will be lonely and bereft.

We have the authority, under the *War Powers Act*, to approve or disapprove conflict after 60 days that has been initiated by the president. And we are here again today, but this time we're here after the American people in this election made it very clear that they have no support for this war without end. My hope is that all of us here will accept our responsibility to make a decision as to whether we authorize the commander-in-chief to be in this reckless war. My hope is each and every one of us will vote no.

I do also want to add my view about an action that I believe this Congress should take. Secretary of Defense—he prefers to call it Secretary of War—Pete Hegseth has led a catastrophic effort in this war. [He] has gone beyond any constitutional authorities with his boat strikes, has degraded long-serving members of the military, deprived them of promotions which they had earned, [which] is hurting the morale of the men and women in the armed services.

Mr. President, I believe Secretary Hegseth should be fired. And I believe if the president chooses to retain but not fire Secretary Hegseth, the Congress should impeach and the Senate should convict Secretary Hegseth, so that we can stand for the honor and integrity of the men and women of the military. Mr. President, I yield back.

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