

January 7, 2026

Dear Senator / Representative,

In light of recent events, Taxpayers for Common Sense, a national nonpartisan budget watchdog, reiterates the need for Congress to safeguard the interests of American taxpayers by reasserting congressional authority over the decision to go to war.

As previous administrations of both parties have done in the past, President Trump has ordered the commencement of military action, this time in Venezuela, without congressional authorization. In this case, the President did so without informing Congress of his intention to initiate military operations, which reportedly included over 150 U.S. military aircraft, U.S. cyberattacks, and Special Operations Forces. The Trump Administration claimed that this was a law enforcement operation, carried out with the support of the U.S. military. However, the scale of the military operation paired with the administration's claims to Venezuelan oil and the threat of further military action underscores that this is a military conflict, even if law enforcement is one of the motivations for it. Moreover, the War Powers Resolution lays out in no uncertain terms the circumstances under which the President may introduce the U.S. military into hostilities:

*The constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief to introduce United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, are exercised only pursuant to (1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory authorization, or (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.*

None of those conditions were met prior to the President's decision to attack Venezuela.

Moreover, the President has also suggested that further military operations in Venezuela may be imminent, stating that "if they don't behave, we will do a second strike." He also stated that the U.S. will "run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition." The possibility of further military action and the significant taxpayer costs that would accompany it underscore the urgency of reasserting congressional war powers to ensure that any further commitment of taxpayer resources to military operations against Venezuela are only made with explicit congressional authorization as required by the War Powers Resolution.

American taxpayers know far too well from recent experience that open-ended military conflicts, and particularly those focused on running another country, can carry

tremendous financial costs. In recent decades, congressional war powers have been steadily eroded by administrations of both parties, also at tremendous costs to taxpayers. If Congress believes it is in the best interests of the United States to take further military action within or against Venezuela, it should vote to authorize such action through a formal authorization for the use of military force that lays out the objectives, scope, and any limits of such action.

Importantly, reasserting congressional authority over the decision to go to war at this time is not necessarily a rejection of the Trump Administration's goals in Venezuela, nor of the acts it has committed in Venezuela thus far. Rather, it is necessary to ensure that further taxpayer resources are not expended for military action against Venezuela or any other nation that has not attacked the United States without explicit congressional authorization. Reasserting congressional authority would not prevent the President and the military from acting in an emergency or if the U.S. is attacked.

At a time when congressional authority and oversight tools are under attack, Congress must reassert its constitutional authorities across the board. Asserting its authority over the decision to go to war is among the most important places to start. The Constitution gave Congress both the power of the purse and the power to decide when the nation goes to war, ensuring that such important decisions are carefully considered by the people's representatives in Congress. Congress owes it to taxpayers to exercise these powers, rather than cede them to the executive branch through inaction.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Steve Ellis

President, Taxpayers for Common Sense