

Idaho Statesman

Double-speaking Sen. Risch must step up to bring troops home from ‘forever wars’

Joseph Evans

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Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, has mastered the political art of double-speak.

In Boise at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon, he expressed his commitment to bringing our troops home from the endless wars in the Middle East, saying, “I am through nation-building with countries that don’t want it!”

Immediately before these comments, and again right after, Risch sang a much different tune in Washington. Three times in 90 days, Risch and the powerful “War Caucus” voted against withdrawing our troops from Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

On Jan. 31, Risch voted for the McConnell Amendment, Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019, which prevents a “precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces from the ongoing fight.”

More recently, on March 13, the “good” senator voted against S.J.Res.7, a joint resolution to remove U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities in Yemen. S.J. Res.7 was sponsored by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, with co-sponsors conservative Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and every Democrat senator currently running for POTUS 2020, including Cory Booker, D-New Jersey; Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts; Kirsten Gillibrand, D-New York; Kamala Harris, D-California; and Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota.

Did Risch object to the resolution because of political alliances? It’s a fair question considering his comments to his constituents just a few weeks prior.

A recent poll conducted by The Smithsonian and Stars and Stripes magazines found that 86 percent of current and former military believe the wars in the Middle East have “gone on for too long.” Further, a Cato Institute study found that “military intervention and nation building efforts, even at current ‘light footprint’ levels, cause more problems than they solve, including spawning more anti-American sentiment and creating, rather than diminishing, the conditions that lead to terrorism.”

As a veteran and proud Idahoan, I must ask my junior senator and his peers, what standard must be met for you to honestly support, and advocate with integrity for, bringing our troops home? You have voted to guarantee that we can’t leave “precipitously,” but you claim you are through with nation building. The dichotomy is confusing your constituents that chose you as the steward for their voice in D.C.

After four tours of duty in the Middle East and two of my children already serving in uniform, I can speak with a reliable level of certainty. Idahoans — and America — are exhausted with the “Forever War.” It is time to recognize the victories achieved, especially in Afghanistan, with the capture and killing of every single person who attacked or aided the attackers on 9/11, and the defeats, 4,884 dead service members in Iraq, 3,547 in Afghanistan, and the endless 22-a-day at home. It is time to bring our sons and daughters back to our shores.

Sen. Risch, stop the political double-speak. Idahoans deserve better. Our veterans and their families deserve better. Show Idahoans that you support an end to nation building and use the power of your elected office and committee chairmanship to bring our troops home!

If you agree, please sign the petition at www.BringOutTroopsHome.US.