

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8006

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, February 22, 2019

Brief Description: Requesting that Congress establish more checks and balances to reduce the possibility of nuclear war.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Keiser, Frockt, Hunt, Kuderer, Pedersen and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/22/19, 2/22/19 [DP, DNP].

Brief Summary of Joint Memorial

- Requests that Congress establish a system of checks and balances to ensure that the President no longer has sole authority to launch nuclear weapons except in retaliation to a nuclear attack and make it the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Hasegawa and Takko.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Zeiger, Ranking Member.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The U.S. President has sole authority to authorize the use of U.S. nuclear weapons, inherent in the constitutional role as Commander in Chief. The President can seek counsel from military advisors; those advisors are then required to transmit and implement the orders authorizing nuclear use. The President does not need the concurrence of either military advisors or the U.S. Congress to order the launch of nuclear weapons. Neither the military nor Congress can overrule these orders.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Nearly 14,500 nuclear weapons are known to exist in the world, with 6450 in the United States. Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, on the Kitsap Peninsula, is home to the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the Western Hemisphere.

Summary of Joint Memorial: The Legislature requests that Congress establish checks and balances to ensure that the President no longer has the sole authority to launch nuclear weapons, except in retaliation to a nuclear attack, and to make it the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The fear of global annihilation at the arbitrary decision-making authority of the person who can unilaterally push the button is frightening. Washington should take point on this because we have more nuclear weapons than any other state, which makes us a prime target. Protections are needed from leaders who may not act in our best interests or who may be irrational. We do not need nuclear weapons—we can end the nuclear threat. Nuclear weapons represent a threat to civilization itself. Our conventional weapons are strong enough to defend ourselves. Whether detonated or not, nuclear weapons are detrimental and costly to our society. Nuclear testing has adversely affected the health of the people of the Marshall Islands. Our war expenditures are not making us more secure. State leadership is needed to get this vital issue on the national agenda.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Bob Hasegawa, prime sponsor; Louise Lansberry, John Repp, Jade Lauw, Lisa Johnson, Washington Against Nuclear Weapons; Glen Anderson, Olympia Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; Bruce Amundson, Laura Skelton, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility; Mary Hanson, Seattle Fellowship of Reconciliation; Rodney Brunelle, Pax Christi Pacific Northwest; William Burns, WSP.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.