



# Bipartisanship in Senate rebuke



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**T**he death toll from the Yemen civil war and resulting famine reaches into the tens of thousands. Now, after years of strife, a majority of U.S. senators have gone on record against President **Donald Trump's** continued military support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition that comprises one side in the fighting.

Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-Ky.) publicly sided with the Trump administration. But the bipartisan measure advanced to a floor vote on Wednesday by 60-39, with 11 Republicans in favor. And on Thursday, the resolution carried, 56-41. So did an amendment from Sen. **Todd Young** (R-Ind.) to ensure that midair refueling between U.S. and Saudi jets — suspended last month — does not resume.

At this point the move remains symbolic, with House Republicans letting it lapse before transferring power to the newly elected Democratic majority next month. But the resolution stands out because members of the president's party in the upper house joined Democrats in defying him by invoking the War Powers Act of 1973.

With Trump vexed by law enforcement probes, the willingness of lawmakers to move the measure forward signals his political weakness.

The president also has drawn fire from within both parties for refusing to confront Saudi leadership over dissident **Jamal Khashoggi's** widely



AP / EVAN VUCCI

**GOP senators joined Democrats in reprimanding President Trump.**

protested murder — the subject of a separate resolution on Thursday.

For the United States, the rationale for assisting the Saudis' air war in Yemen involves pushing back Iran, which supports the violent Houthi rebellion against the Yemeni government.

Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo** said: "Iran is running rampant throughout the Middle East. America has an important ally in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

Last month Pompeo met with senators to argue against the Yemen resolution, warning it would "encourage the Houthis" and "would encourage the Iranians."

The warnings may be moot. On Thursday, UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** announced that the warring sides agreed to an immediate ceasefire in the Red Sea port of Hodeidah, where much of the humanitarian aid for the suffering region must pass through.

Even before the latest debate, Trump and fellow Repub-

licans in the legislative branch sounded discordant notes on foreign policy. Congress collectively has declined to take its cues from the president on Russia, NATO, tariffs and border fencing.

Under these conditions, it is hard to believe Trump would soon start commanding the agenda on Capitol Hill. It seems as if the legislature leads the executive when its members reach enough of their own consensus. This happened with a major tax bill, but such deep issues as health care, immigration and infrastructure remain legislatively adrift heading into the president's third year.

Even McConnell's statements against the resolution fell short of cheerleading for the administration's approach to Saudi Arabia.

"If the Senate wants to pick a constitutional fight with the executive branch over war powers," he said Wednesday, "I would advise my colleagues to pick a better case. Their resolution is an inappropriate vehicle."

## SPINCYCLE

GUIDE TO POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

### Dems seek Albany lobbyist

The Suffolk County Legislature's Democratic majority is eyeing the hiring of an Albany lobbyist to represent its views in the state capital and is looking to put forward a procedural resolution at the last legislative meeting of the year Tuesday.

Presiding Officer **DuWayne Gregory** (D-Copague) said contenders include Gotham Government Relations, headed by **Brad Gerstman** and **David Schwartz**; Empire State Strategies, headed by **Arthur "Jerry" Kremer**; local lobbyist **George Hoffman**; and County Executive **Steve Bellone's** former Albany lobbyist **Luis Montes**, also Islip Democratic chairman.

The county executive traditionally has handled Albany lobbying. The work is being done by Bellone chief of staff **Lisa Black** and Deputy County Executive **Jon Kaiman**.

Gregory said funding for

Albany lobbying will come from the legislature's \$40,000 budget for consulting work.

"With a new Democratic State Senate and Assembly we want to be able to weigh in on matters of state importance," said Gregory.

"We are not sure why this expense is warranted but we are willing to discuss the matter with the presiding officer," Bellone spokesman Jason Elan said.

Legis. **Tom Cilmi** (R-Bay Shore), minority caucus leader, called the proposed spending unnecessary.

"We have potholes in the streets, need employees in 911 call centers . . . and we have enough high-paid staff to do an effective job in Albany, especially with a Democratic Senate majority," Cilmi said. "This just seems like a move to write a check to someone who needs an additional check."

— Rick Brand

### New job for Curran aide?

**Michael Martino**, communications director for Nassau County Executive **Laura Curran**, could move to a new job at Nassau University Medical Center next month, doing outreach and communications for the East Meadow hospital.

**George Tsunis**, chairman of the board of Nassau Health Care Corp., the public benefit corporation that runs NUMC, said he was looking for a vice president of communications to help him transition the hospital from a sickness center to a wellness center, to provide detection and prevention services to Nassau communities.

Tsunis, appointed by Curran earlier this year, said he has known Martino for a long time and considers him a "great get."

"I would love to recruit Michael," Tsunis said. "But this is a board decision. There are seven other peo-

ple on the board. But it would be something I would wholeheartedly support."

Tsunis said salary had yet to be discussed.

Curran said last week Martino, who earns \$158,000, was responsible for an erroneous robocall about a senior citizen tax exemption deadline made to 400,000 Nassau residents, instead of 3,500 senior citizens.

Martino apologized publicly for the confusion.

When asked about a possible move to NUMC, Martino said, "I have been honored to serve County Executive Curran as she chose to bravely take on difficult issues that are critical to Nassau County and put government, not politics, first. It's been an incredible 12 months and now I am looking forward to exploring new opportunities. I've known George for a long time and the admiration is mutual." — Celeste Hadrick

The 1600 is Newsday's daily inside look at the Trump presidency

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