

## Bring Our Troops Home movement growing, and Risch says he agrees

By Sgt. Dan McKnight

In February, I wrote a column urging U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch, R-Idaho, to support President Donald Trump's call in his 2019 State of the Union to bring our troops home from endless wars in the Middle East.

"Thanks to their bravery," Trump said, "we're now able to pursue a political solution to this long, bloody conflict. ... After two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace. ... It's time to give our brave warriors a warm welcome home."

Polls indicate the American people — and our military — agree.

A *Smithsonian* poll found 84 percent of U.S. troops and veterans believe occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have "been going on too long." *Politico* found 81 percent of Trump voters support withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, and 76 percent from Syria. Sixty percent of veterans and military families support removing troops from Afghanistan, another poll found, and Pew Research Center found 64 percent of veterans say Iraq was not worth fighting; roughly 60 percent agree regarding Afghanistan.

In the months since, a group of Idaho veterans launched BringOurTroopsHome.US, and our Facebook page has over 5,000 likes. But what started to influence Sen. Risch has grown beyond Idaho.

Rep. Tyler Lindholm, R-Sundance, Navy veteran and majority whip of the Wyoming state House, announced his support and formed a Wyoming chapter at:

WYBringOurTroopsHome.com.

Lindholm and fellow state Rep. Jared Olsen, former Wyoming GOP vice chair, coauthored a commentary published Sept. 3 in Washington, D.C., sharply rebuking Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney's public criticism of President Trump for not starting another Middle East war with Iran and for trying to end the one in Afghanistan.

"Rather than rush to a microphone to publicly criticize Trump's judgment as mistaken, weak, defeatist, and potentially dangerous," Cheney's two home state Republicans wrote, "she should be giving our demonstrably strong commander-in-chief the benefit of the doubt if he shows reasoned and measured restraint based on the intelligence and military options before him, and if he moves to bring our troops home. ... Rep. Cheney should stop



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attacking the President when he acts to do what he said he'd do: end America's endless wars."

That stern rebuke grabbed national attention when it was endorsed by Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., a long-time proponent of bringing our troops home.

"Paul (tweeted) a *Washington Examiner* op-ed from Wyoming legislators," the *New York Times* reported, "upbraiding Cheney for opposing the president's push to withdraw troops from Afghanistan."

"Two Republican state House members in Cheney's home state authored an op-ed calling on her to 'stop carping at Trump for rejecting endless war,'" the *Washington Post* reported regarding the Twitter exchange that followed between Cheney and Paul.

"The Twitter feud appears to have begun," *The Hill* reported, "when Paul tweeted an op-ed written by Wyoming state legislators calling on Cheney to stop 'publicly criticizing our Republican commander-in-chief and seemingly pushing the U.S. toward yet another endless war in the Middle East.'"

But our movement has grown even beyond the spotlight generated from Wyoming.

Republican state Rep. Pat McGeehan, West Virginia, an Air Force Academy grad who served as an intelligence officer in Afghanistan, launched a chapter there:

WVBringOurTroopsHome.com.

He's sponsored bipartisan legislation requiring that that state's National Guard cannot be mobilized for combat without a formal declaration of war by Congress, as required by the Constitution.

New chapters are being launched to support such legislation in multiple states in 2020.

But since it was the initial objective of our efforts, we're encouraged that Sen. Risch, rhetorically at least, seems to agree more with President Trump and Sen. Paul than with Cheney.

"We cannot and will not be the world's policeman," he told the Idaho Falls newspaper.

"I agree with you," Risch said in response to my urging him — before a Boise Chamber audience — to use his powerful chairmanship to help bring our troops home. "Let me tell you why I share your feelings," he said, recounting America's success at building viable democracies in post-war Germany, Japan and South Korea.

"We've been at this now for over two decades, trying to replicate that success in the Middle East, and what do we have to show for it? A goose egg. ... If you're going to give somebody a gift of democracy, a free market system, human rights, of basic rights stated in our Bill of Rights and Constitution, they've got to want it, and if they don't want it," Risch said, "it doesn't matter how much you shovel at them, it isn't going to happen."

"We've spent \$2 trillion now in Afghanistan, and we've shed lots and lots of American blood there. I'm with you," he assured me. "I am through trying to do nation-building with countries that don't want it. They've got to show some type of an appreciation, some type of an embracement of it, and they simply don't."

That strong public policy statement is encouraging, but I look forward to the day when Sen. Risch's voting record in Washington matches his words, and how strongly he says — when here in Idaho — that he agrees with us.

If you agree it's time to end our endless wars, and support our troops by bringing them home, please sign our petition at:

BringOurTroopsHome.US.

*Sgt. Dan McKnight of Meridian served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves, U.S. Army and Idaho Army National Guard, including a tour in Afghanistan. He is the founder of BringOurTroopsHome.US.*