

Senate to vote Friday on Trump's Iran war authority

The Senate will vote Friday on a measure to block President Trump from taking military action against Iran without congressional approval.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) announced that leadership had hashed out a deal to vote on the proposal from Sens. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and Tom Udall (D-N.M.), and that they would hold the vote open to give 2020 candidates the chance to return from Miami.

"We intend to stay in session this week to finish the NDAA bill and allow for a vote in relation to the Udall amendment. Senators should plan to vote on Friday on the Udall amendment," McConnell said from the Senate floor, referring to the National Defense Authorization Act.

He added that "here's the good news, the vote will start first thing in the morning and be held open into the afternoon to accommodate as many senators as possible."

The amendment from Kaine and Udall would prevent Trump from using funding to take military action against Iran without congressional approval. Supporters of the amendment argue Trump could still use action without approval if American troops are attacked.

The amendment is unlikely to garner the 60 votes necessary to be added to the NDAA. Even if every Democrat supports the measure, they would still need to win over 13 Republicans.

The decision to delay the vote on the Iran amendment comes roughly a day after Republicans, including McConnell, dismissed the call from Democrats to delay the Iran vote until after the Democratic debates, which are taking place on Wednesday and Thursday night.

"I was incredulous to hear the Democratic leader call yesterday to postpone moving forward with the NDAA. Apparently, some of our Democratic friends need to go hit the presidential campaign trail. They can't be here because they have to go campaign," McConnell said.

In a procedural twist, senators are going to pass the mammoth defense bill on Thursday. If the Kaine-Udall proposal gets enough support it will be added to the defense bill retroactively.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) touted the agreement, saying a vote on the Kaine-Udall proposal was “fair and only right.”

“Many Americans feel that the constitutional right of Congress to examine foreign conflict and potential war be upheld,” he added.

The fight over the Iran amendment had threatened to derail the NDAA, with Democrats threatening to block the defense bill unless they got a vote.

Democrats debated their strategy for more than an hour during a closed-door lunch on Tuesday.

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), who is co-sponsoring the Iran amendment, said there was a “strong belief” among several members of the caucus that the NDAA is the right vehicle for holding the line about demanding a vote on Iran.

“There’s a lot of strong belief that we need to take a vote on war in Iran,” Murphy said after the lunch. “There’s there’s a lot of sentiment that this is the moment to take a stand.”

Republicans believe they have the votes to defeat the Iran amendment if it comes up for a vote.

McConnell told reporters during a weekly press conference that he hoped the amendment would be defeated but acknowledged the margin could be close.

“My hope is that it will be defeated. We’ll find out by how much of a margin, but we — we hope to defeat it. It’s simply not required under this set of circumstances,” McConnell said.

Sen. John Thune (S.D.), the No. 2 Republican senator, told reporters that “a few” Republicans would probably defect and support the Iran amendment.

“I think most of our conference is in a different place and doesn’t want to in an unprecedented way put constraints on the president’s ability to defend the country,” Thune said.

Source:

<https://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/senate/450500-senate-to-vote-friday-on-trumps-iran-war-authority>

[Disclaimer]