

Isn't it Time to Vote on America's Forever Wars?

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War is good business for some people. But war is very costly for most people, and the price is often paid in blood. Advisory elections may be a solution.

Since the end of World War II, over 100,000 Americans have paid that price with their lives. Another 300,000 plus have been wounded, many with life altering injuries. [[Wikipedia – US Casualties of War](#)] And the monetary cost has been in the trillions. For the last 80 years more than 25% of every tax dollar collected by the federal government has gone to fund America's unconstitutional forever wars either directly or indirectly. [[US spending on defense](#)]

And what has been the result of this enormous expenditure of blood and treasure? The sad reality is that the last 80 years of America's interventionist foreign policy has been a dismal failure. Despite all the costs Americans have borne, the world is less safe and more chaotic than ever. Presidents and Senators and Congress Members come and go, but they have not taken seriously President Dwight Eisenhower's warning to guard against the influence of the military industrial complex. [[Eisenhower farewell address](#)]

All Politics is Local

Former House Speaker Tip O'Neill famously said that "[all politics is local](#)." Perhaps it is time to bring that sentiment to the issue of foreign policy. After all, every American military death or injury is felt most poignantly in that person's local community. After all, every dollar of American military spending is funded by an American tax payer at the local level.

Polls consistently show that Americans are not in favor of endless wars. But polls are ephemeral and the politicians who decide about war pay little attention to them. Isn't it time for the people to vote on Americas endless wars?

By using a mechanism of direct democracy, Americans could express their opinion more forcefully, namely by casting an actual ballot on American military policy, in local advisory elections.

Advisory elections are local non-binding referenda which can be implemented in most, if not all, of the thousands of municipalities and counties in the United States; and they are unlikely to be influenced by the military-industrial complex. An advisory election provides a unique opportunity for reflection, discussion, and debate on important matters of public policy which affect their local community. If federal politicians begin to see a movement opposed to America's forever wars expressed in actual votes, their voting behavior would likely change.

Americans routinely use direct democracy to vote on local bond propositions, amend state constitutions and charters in home rule cities, and in non-binding elections to reveal popular opinion on particular issues.

As an example of how this process has met with some success in the past, consider the Nuclear Freeze movement. In the late 1970's and the early 1980's, American citizens who were concerned about the enormous and growing arsenal of nuclear weapons stockpiled by the Soviet Union and the United States began to promote local advisory elections throughout the United States. These non-binding elections developed a momentum which certainly played a part in the Reagan-Gorbachev negotiations which ultimately resulted in a [significant reduction in nuclear arms](#) by both countries. Historian [Lawrence Wittner discusses the Nuclear Freeze Movement in several YouTube videos](#).

How advisory elections might work today

Non-binding advisory propositions can be placed on local ballots by city councils and county governments; and a single voter or a citizens' committee can initiate this type of proposition by lobbying local leaders through petitions.

A proposed ballot proposition on foreign policy should be relatively brief and can be tailored to the local community. Not every community needs to use identical language as long as the general sentiment remains consistent. Local office holders will decide the final wording. As an example of potential ballot language, consider the following proposition language:

Should the United States prioritize the use of diplomacy to resolve international differences, and initiate peace talks with its adversaries, including Russia, China, and Iran?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

The first step in implementing this direct democracy strategy is to contact elected representatives at the municipal and county level and request that they place a non-binding proposition on the next election ballot. During the Nuclear Freeze campaign, many local jurisdictions voted to support that resolution themselves. In many other cases, the local jurisdictions agreed to place the measure on the ballot.

If a local jurisdiction is reluctant or unwilling to place the measure on the ballot, a petition process may be available to the voters. In smaller jurisdictions, the petition process can be accomplished by one person or a handful of volunteers. In larger jurisdictions, a petition may require considerably more

assistance, and in some cases the process may be too costly and onerous to achieve. However, as this advisory election process grows in jurisdictions around the country, elected representatives in larger cities and counties may be moved to take part in this movement also.

There are over 3,000 counties and nearly 20,000 municipalities in the United States; and the deadline for finalizing the November general election ballot varies widely across these local jurisdictions. It is critical to begin this process as early as possible so that local office holders will have the opportunity to give it full consideration.

Additional information about advisory or non-binding elections can be found online at Ballotpedia.org [[Ballotpedia on Advisory Questions](#)], [Initiative and Referendum Institute](#), [IRI's Texas page](#), and [Foreign Policy Alliance on advisory ballot questions](#) and a useful reference on how direct democracy is used world wide is [“Let the People Rule” by John Matsusaka](#).

Refocusing the Foreign Policy Narrative

A strong case can be made that, for at least the last 80 years, United States foreign policy has been the most important, and most ignored, issue in every election. Foreign policy decisions made by the politicians in Washington have had dire consequences for the lives, the health, and the pocket books of every American, not to mention the chaos and destruction imposed on many other places of the Earth.

It is time to recognize that foreign policy is a critical local issue for the American people. Americas interventionist foreign policy has been an enormous failure. Consider how 80 years of a foreign policy based on diplomacy, law, and non-intervention would have benefited the United States as well as the entire world.

As with the Nuclear Freeze movement, citizens can regain control of the foreign policy narrative by implementing advisory elections in their local jurisdictions throughout the United States. Foreign policy can be, and should be, a local issue.

Isn't it time for We, the People, to vote on Americas forever wars?

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Bill Crosier (Democrat), Barry Klein (Republican), Joe Marcinkowski (Green), and Allan Vogel (Libertarian) are members of the Foreign Policy Alliance, Inc., a non-partisan organization, which was formed to educate and advocate across the political spectrum for a United States foreign policy that emphasizes diplomacy, law, and cooperation, rather than costly and counterproductive intervention.

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