

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Vote to exempt General Austin sets “alarming precedent”

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) today released the following statement after the House passed H.R. 335, a bill that would exempt General Lloyd Austin, President Biden’s nominee to serve as Secretary of Defense, from restrictions that prevent recently retired military officers from leading the Pentagon. Since the National Security Act was signed into law in 1947, Congress has made similar exemptions only twice before today.

“In 2017, Sen. Jack Reed cautioned that granting waivers to allow recently retired military officers to serve atop the Pentagon “should happen no more than once in a generation.” He’s right. But today we find ourselves not only making this “once in a generation” exception twice in the span of four years, but doing so without any public hearing.

“This abdication of our most basic constitutional obligation should concern all Americans, particularly now that we have more data. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that General Mattis faced challenges as Secretary of Defense that stemmed directly from his lack of distance from his time in uniform. With this vote, we are setting an alarming precedent that presumes approval – not disapproval – of recently retired military officers. Consequently, granting this exception without a public hearing not only abdicates our constitutional responsibility, but inverts Congressional intent in the 1947 National Security Act.

“Make no mistake: I have enormous respect for General Austin’s lifetime of service to our nation. But today’s vote is not on his experience or merits, it’s on the higher principle that civilian control of our military should be our country’s North Star.”

Click [HERE](#) to watch Rep. Gallagher speak on the House floor regarding the vote. Click [HERE](#) to read Rep. Gallagher’s op-ed in the Wall Street Journal outlining why he believes Congress should not grant General Austin a waiver.