



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy
Floor Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Urging Support for H.R. 804, the *Protect the National Security Council from Political
Interference Act of 2017*
Offered During Consideration of H.R. 428, the *Red River Gradient Boundary Survey Act*
February 14, 2017

Thank you to my colleague from Florida, Mr. Hastings, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker:

Two weeks ago, I introduced H.R. 804, legislation designed to ensure that the deliberations and decisions of the National Security Council are not unreasonably influenced by partisan politics. The bill has garnered nearly 130 cosponsors, including the ranking members of the House armed services, foreign affairs, and intelligence committees. It is my hope that the bill will obtain support from my colleagues across the aisle, because the principle it seeks to vindicate has long enjoyed bipartisan backing.

The motivation for my legislation was President Trump's directive formally authorizing his chief political advisor, Stephen Bannon, to attend all meetings of the NSC and its main sub-group, the Principals Committee. This aspect of the President's directive generated concern from respected military and intelligence professionals across the ideological spectrum.

For example, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain characterized Mr. Bannon's appointment as a "radical departure" from precedent. Former White House Chief of Staff, Defense Secretary and CIA Director Leon Panetta observed that the "last place you want to put somebody who worries about politics is in a room where they're talking about national security." And the ex-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Michael Mullen, asserted that "[e]very president has the right and the responsibility to shape the security council as he sees fit. But partisan politics has no place at that table."

My bill would amend the 1947 law in which Congress created the NSC and established the statutory members of the Council. It would add simple language to provide that no individual whose "primary or predominant responsibility is political in nature" shall regularly attend or participate in meetings of the NSC or the Principals Committee.

I want to emphasize that, while I may disagree with President Trump and Mr. Bannon on a range of matters, this bill is not about any specific individual. The prohibition in my legislation would apply whether the president or political advisor in question is Republican or Democrat, and irrespective of their particular policy views or personal attributes.

At its core, this bill is about fidelity to a deeply American principle—the principle that the service members in our all-volunteer military, the quiet professionals in our intelligence community, and the men and women who protect our homeland should never have their lives disrupted or placed at risk because of a national security policymaking process that is contaminated by partisan politics.

The president is free to obtain political and policy advice from whomever he wishes. However, he should not be free to place a political advisor on the most vital national security policymaking body in our country. Congress created the NSC, and Congress can and should set reasonable parameters governing its membership.

In addition, my bill would express the view of Congress that the Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—respectively, the top intelligence and military advisors to the president—should have a standing invitation to attend all Principals Committee meetings. This is a response to language in the President’s directive that restricts the attendance of these two individuals to only those meetings “where issues pertaining to their responsibilities and expertise” are discussed. While not without precedent, this limitation is alarming, particularly when considered side-by-side with the decision to give Mr. Bannon unfettered access to all NSC meetings.

I respectfully urge my colleagues to defeat the previous question and to support H.R. 804.