United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write regarding the Department of Defense's failure to provide the American people with basic information about the war with Iran and its cost to taxpayers, even as the human costs of this war rise. More than six months into a war that the President said would last six weeks, 18 American servicemembers have been killed, 824 have been wounded, and more than 50,000 troops are currently deployed in the Middle East. Our troops have had their deployments extended repeatedly, as with the USS Lincoln and now the 82nd Airborne. Our offices have all received outreach from military families concerned about the safety and well-being of their loved ones serving and sacrificing in this war.

Meanwhile, at home, American taxpayers have already paid an extra $100 billion out of their pockets for higher gas and diesel prices alone and at least another $60 billion in higher costs for things like groceries, mortgages, and plane tickets as a result of the war.[1] Now you are asking that they pay again to fund a war of choice that Congress never authorized and the President launched with no strategic plan.

Based on the little information provided, the Department says it has already spent $42 billion on this war, though unofficial estimates put that figure much higher.[2] In June, you formally asked the American taxpayers to foot the bill for a $67 billion Iran war supplemental request.[3] This is on top of the Pentagon's $1.5 trillion fiscal year 2027 budget request.[4] And all of these pending requests come while the Department still has $34 billion in unspent funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.[5] In the last week, the Congressional Budget Office and the Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General have issued their own reports with inconsistent numbers.

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[1] David Uberti, "Americans Have Spent $100 Billion More on Fuel During the Iran War," Wall Street Journal, September 16, 2026, https://www.wsj.com/business/energy-oil/americans-have-spent-100-billion-more-on-fuel-during-the-iran-war-377952a1; Mark Zandi, "Iran war has cost your household $1,000 — and counting," Philadelphia Inquirer, June 24, 2026, https://www.inquirer.com/economy/iran-war-consumer-costs-grocery-gas-prices-20260624.html.

[2] Filip Timotija, Pentagon tells Congress Iran war cost at least $42B, The Hill, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/6090292-pentagon-iran-war-cost-increase.

[3] CBS News, "Trump administration asks Congress for $88 billion in supplemental funding for Iran war, Ebola, farm aid," June 24, 2026, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-war-supplemental-funding-request-pentagon-trump-congress.

[4] Office of Management and Budget, Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2027, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/budget_fy2027.pdf.

[5] U.S. Department of Defense, One Big Beautiful Bill Act Obligations, September 14, 2026.

Despite your stated needs, you have repeatedly refused to share basic information that previous Administrations, Republican and Democratic, provided to the American public and Congress during times of war. Donald Rumsfeld, as Secretary of Defense during the Iraq War, briefed Congress more than 20 times in the first six months of that war.[6] In his briefings, he publicly provided granular detail about the war, including objectives; precise figures on damaged aircraft; quality of life for our troops—down to the number of days it took to deliver mail; and detailed breakdowns for transportation, operational support, and munitions replenishment costs in the supplemental request.[7] In stark contrast, you have briefed Congress just seven times in that same period and, in those appearances, refused to answer basic questions about the objectives and cost of this war. Your Department has held only eight Pentagon press briefings or interviews since the start of the Iran War, compared to more than 70 in the first month of the Iraq War alone.[8]

This lack of basic information extends to the Pentagon's spending. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress regularly received public supplemental requests that were more than a hundred pages long, with detailed explanations for how funding would be used, down to the number of barrels of fuel. In contrast, your public $67 billion Iran war supplemental request was a thin, seven-page document with only vague descriptions, such as "$1.2 billion for Administration priorities."[9]

Despite asking for tens of billions of additional taxpayer dollars, you have so far failed to provide basic information on how this money has and will be spent. Congress must have access to this information to carry out our oversight responsibilities. It is the bare minimum that any American would expect in balancing their own household budget.

You shared this belief before entering government. In 2012, you criticized the Department's ability to "shift literally hundreds of millions of dollars from program to program with little accountability." You added, "[r]eforming the culture at the Pentagon to bring greater spending accountability will be difficult, but it's long overdue."[10] And just last year, you said that "the American taxpayers deserve" to know where their money goes, "how it's spent and make sure it's spent wisely."[11] We agree.

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[6] Powell Moore, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, Congressional Contacts by Secretary of Defense, November 24, 2003, Rumsfeld Library, https://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/2934/2003-11-24%20from%20Powell%20Moore%20re%20Congressional%20Contacts%20by%20Secretary%20of%20Defense.pdf.

[7] U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Lessons Learned During Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Ongoing Operations in the United States Central Command Region," hearing, 108th Cong., 1st sess., July 9, 2003, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-108shrg96501/pdf/CHRG-108shrg96501.pdf.

[8] Reece Dower, "War in Iran showcases Pentagon's break from public affairs norms," Medill News Service, June 10, 2026, https://dc.medill.northwestern.edu/blog/2026/06/10/iran-war-pentagon-comms-norms.

[9] Russell Vought, Director, Office of Management and Budget, "Letter to the Honorable Mike Johnson," June 24, 2026, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026.06.24-Letter-to-the-Honorable-Mike-Johnson.pdf

[10] Pete Hegseth, "Cut Defense Spending? Good Idea – But Sequestration's Not The Way," Breaking Defense, July 20, 2012, https://breakingdefense.com/2012/07/cut-defense-spending-good-idea-but-sequestrations-not-the-wa.

[11] U.S. Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth Town Hall," February 7, 2025, https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/4060651/secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-town-hall-at-the-pentagon.

Given this, we request the following information to inform the Senate's decision-making by September 30, 2026.

1. **Cost of the Iran War**: Please provide a detailed breakdown for the cost of military operations against Iran to date, inclusive of all direct and indirect costs attributable to the conflict. This should include damage to military installations, aircraft, and equipment; cost to refurbish deployed ships and aircraft; and expected benefits for veterans.

2. **$67 Billion Iran War Supplemental**: Please provide a breakdown of the Administration's supplemental request, including a detailed accounting for each major funding category and estimated expenses for the war in Iran. This breakdown should identify which portions of the request are intended to reimburse costs already incurred, which are intended to fund anticipated future operations, and which are unrelated to military operations against Iran. Please also note potential future funding requirements not included in the request, such as repairing military installations.

3. **One Big Beautiful Bill Act Funding**: Please provide a detailed accounting of how the $34 billion remaining from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will be spent, on what timeline, and whether any of these funds will support operations related to the Iran war.

The American people elected us to be responsible stewards of their tax dollars. The information we are requesting is the bare minimum required for us to carry out that responsibility. We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

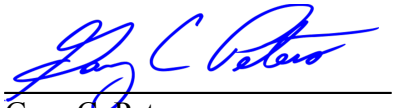
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

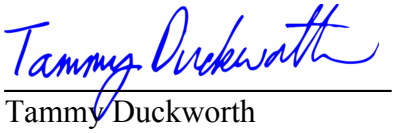
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Ruben Gallego
United States Senator

Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



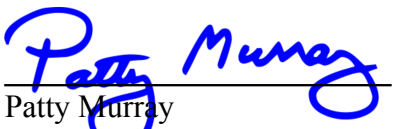
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

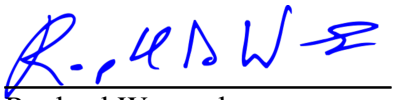
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

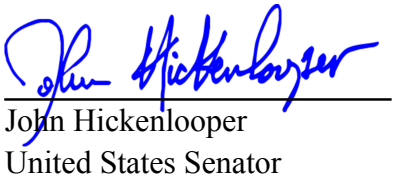
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



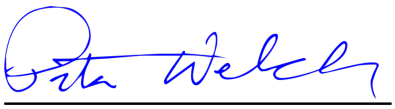
Patty Murray
United States Senator



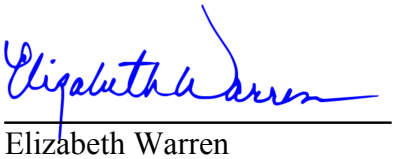
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



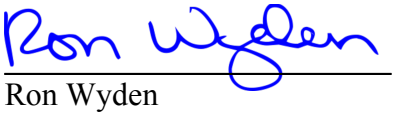
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator

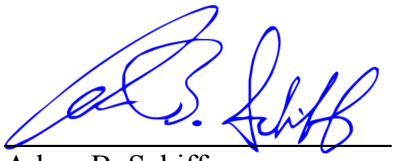


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

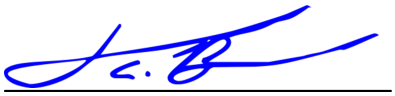


Ron Wyden
United States Senator

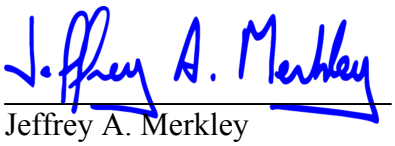
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

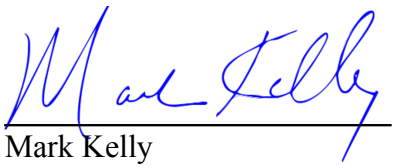


Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

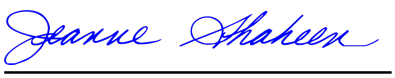
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator

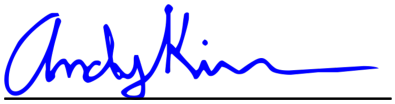
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



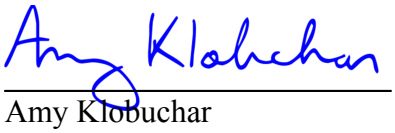
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

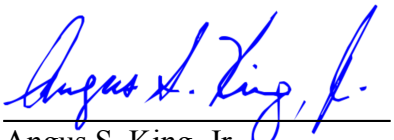


Andy Kim
United States Senator

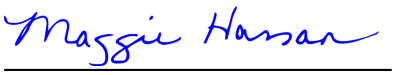
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

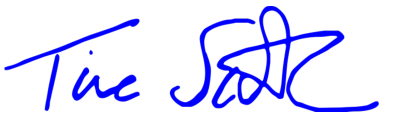


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

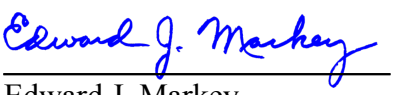


Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

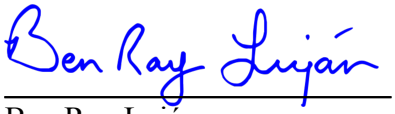
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



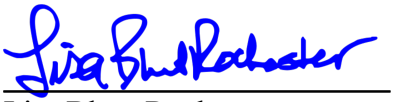
Tina Smith
United States Senator



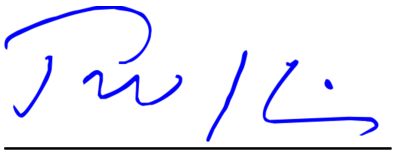
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



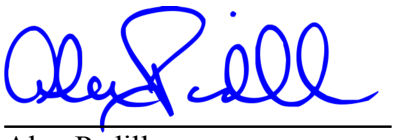
Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



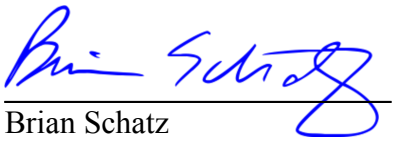
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator

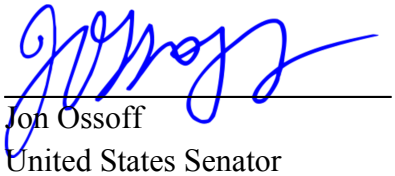
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

CC: Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) / Chief Financial Officer Jules W. Hurst III