STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

SENATE RESOLUTION

URGING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO PURSUE A BROAD RANGE OF MEASURES TO REDUCE THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR WAR, TO SIGN AND RATIFY THE TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (TPNW), TO MAKE NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT THE CENTERPIECE OF OUR NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY, AND TO SPEARHEAD A GLOBAL EFFORT TO PREVENT NUCLEAR WAR

Introduced By: Senators Mack, Bell, Euer, Burke, Calkin, F Lombardi, Acosta, Anderson, Lawson, and Rogers

Date Introduced: February 15, 2022

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

WHEREAS, Nuclear weapons are the most destructive weapons ever created by mankind, with immense destructive capacity and lingering radiation effects after detonation; and

WHEREAS, Ninety-five percent (95%) of these weapons are in the hands of the United States and Russia, and the rest are held by seven other countries: China, France, Israel, India, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, The use of even a tiny fraction of these weapons could cause worldwide climate disruption and global famine; for example, as few as 100 Hiroshima-sized, small bombs by modern standards, would put at least five million tons of soot into the atmosphere and cause climate disruption across the planet, cutting food production and putting two billion people at risk of starvation; and

WHEREAS, A large-scale nuclear war would kill hundreds of millions of people directly and cause unimaginable environmental damage and catastrophic climate disruption by dropping temperatures across the planet to levels not seen since the ice age; under such conditions, the vast majority of the human race would starve and it is possible we would become extinct as a species; and

WHEREAS, Since the height of the Cold War, the United States and Russia have reduced their active weapons by more than 25,000 nuclear weapons, but approximately 4,000 still exist on both sides, thousands of which are on alert for use on short notice; and

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WHEREAS, Under current federal law, the President has the authority to unilaterally initiate the use of nuclear weapons, and during times of crisis, individuals lower in the chain of command might mistakenly do so; and

WHEREAS, Despite assurances that these arsenals exist solely to guarantee that they are never used, there have been many occasions when nuclear armed states have prepared to use these weapons, and war has been averted at the last instance; and

WHEREAS, The power of the United States stockpile of nuclear weapons is too devastating, and the result of their use too irrevocable to be left to the sole authority of the President; and

WHEREAS, Nuclear weapons do not possess some magical quality that prevents their use; and

WHEREAS, Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara said, in speaking about the Cuban Missile Crisis, "It was luck that prevented nuclear war... yet our nuclear policy cannot be rationally based on a hope that our luck will continue"; and

WHEREAS, The United States maintains nuclear missiles on hair-trigger alert, capable of being launched within minutes after a presidential order, greatly increasing the risk of accidental, mistaken, or unauthorized launch; and

WHEREAS, As the effects of climate change place increased stress on communities around the world and intensify the likelihood of conflict, the danger of nuclear war will grow; and

WHEREAS, The planned expenditure of more than $1 trillion to enhance our nuclear arsenal, and the ever so many more trillions worldwide for similar expenditures by other nuclear weapons countries will not only increase the risk of nuclear disaster, but fuel a global arms race and divert crucial resources needed to assure the well-being of the American people and peoples all over the world; and

WHEREAS, The United States taxpayers spend over $4 million every hour of every day on nuclear weapons; and

WHEREAS, There is an alternative to this march toward nuclear war; and

WHEREAS, The United States, as well as the United Kingdom, China, France and Russia, are obligated under the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to take concrete steps toward eliminating their nuclear arsenals but, since 1970, such steps have not been forthcoming; and

WHEREAS, In July of 2017, the United Nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and as of January 22, 2021, the Treaty went into effect; and

WHEREAS, The Treaty (TPNW) makes it illegal under international law to develop, test,
produce, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile, transfer, use, or threaten the use
of nuclear weapons, and sets out procedures for nuclear-armed signatories to destroy their
existing nuclear stockpiles; and

WHEREAS, A public renouncing of the option of launching a first strike would reduce
tensions and may invite reciprocal public renunciations; and

WHEREAS, The United States, as well all other nuclear weapons powers are not yet
signatories to this Treaty (TPNW); and

WHEREAS, A leadership role for the United States in the elimination of the existence of
nuclear weapons is appropriate and desirable and could lead to new and fruitful international
negotiations toward their elimination; now, therefore be it,

RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby urges the federal
government to spearhead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by renouncing the option of using
nuclear weapons in a “first strike”, ending the President's sole authority to launch a nuclear attack,
taking nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert, canceling any plan to replace or modernize its
nuclear arsenal with enhanced nuclear weapons, and, actively pursue a verifiable agreement
among nuclear armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Senate further urges the President and the Senate of the United
States to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Majority
and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Minority Leader of the
United States House of Representatives, and each member of the Rhode Island Congressional
Delegation.