

April 26, 2019

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer,

We the undersigned call on you to cosponsor S.272, Sen. Elizabeth Warren's bill that would make it the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first.

We live in a time of great uncertainty and danger, with a looming U.S.-Russian nuclear arms race, the imminent collapse of the INF Treaty, the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement, stalled negotiations with North Korea, and doubts about the future of New START. Congress can reduce the risk of nuclear use by sending a clear message to the rest of the world: the United States will not use nuclear weapons first under any circumstances.

In early 2017, then-Vice President Biden [declared](#) that he and President Obama had reached the same conclusion:

*Given our non-nuclear capabilities and the nature of today's threats, it's hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary. Or make sense. President Obama and I are confident we can deter—and defend ourselves and our Allies against—non-nuclear threats through other means.*

Former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry [agrees](#), stating in January 2018:

*We should declare a no-first use policy in order to set a global standard for nuclear deterrence and reinforce the axiom that a nuclear war can never be won and should not be fought.*

Gen. James Cartwright (USMC, ret.), former Vice Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Director of U.S. Strategic Command, also [agrees](#). In 2016, he wrote:

*[A No-First-Use policy] would reduce the risk of a first strike against us during global crises. Leaders of other countries would be calmed by the knowledge that the United States viewed its own weapons as deterrents to nuclear warfare, not as tools of aggression.*

If the United States used a nuclear weapon first, that would significantly increase the risk that the other country would strike back with its own nuclear weapons. Moreover, once started, a nuclear exchange may not stay limited, and the United States will have opened the door to a catastrophic nuclear attack—putting the U.S. public at great risk.

Now is the time for the United States to put an end to Cold War thinking by declaring it will not use nuclear weapons first, moving us all toward a safer, more secure future. Please cosponsor S.272.

Sincerely,

Daryl Kimball  
Executive Director  
Arms Control Association

Cecili Williams  
Executive Director  
Beyond the Bomb

Rachel Bronson  
President  
*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*

John Tierney  
Executive Director  
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Aftab Siddiqui  
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Hans Kristensen  
Director, Nuclear Information Project  
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Diane Randall  
Executive Secretary  
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