

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

DATE: 8/28/2020

SL: Who will win the race for HFAC chair? Join us live at 2pm EST

### The Takeaway:

- With Rep. Engel's primary election defeat, one of the most consequential foreign policy positions in Congress – the House Foreign Affairs Committee chair – is up for grabs. In the running to replace him are Reps. Castro, Meeks, and Sherman.
- Activists around the country are calling for the new HFAC chair to be someone who will break with the status quo and advance a bold, progressive foreign policy. We also demand that the selection process be open, transparent, and accountable.
- That's why **today at 2pm EST, Win Without War is co-hosting a forum featuring candidate Rep. Joaquin Castro**. Join us to hear more about his candidacy for chair, the state of the race, and the Democratic party's foreign policy future.

## The Race for the HFAC Chair and the Future of Democratic Foreign Policy

When it comes to U.S. foreign policy, the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) chair is one of the most consequential roles in Congress. The HFAC chairperson plays a major role in setting the House's foreign policy agenda, steering foreign policy budget priorities, deciding what bills make it to the floor, providing critical Executive Branch oversight, determining which witnesses come before the committee to testify, and more. Now, that position is up for grabs.

With House Democrats expected to retain the majority after the 2020 elections, they will get to decide who holds the committee reins next. The question is: will they double down on the failed status quo or recognize the growing movement for a bold shift toward a more peaceful, progressive U.S. foreign policy?

### How did we get here?

The race for the new HFAC chair began last month when current chair Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY) was defeated in a primary by first-time challenger Jamaal Bowman. Engel's foreign policy record was anything but progressive. He supported the 2003 Iraq War, was one of the few Democrats to oppose the Iran nuclear deal, and was a major backer of (and [backed by](#)) the U.S. weapons industry. Bowman made Engel's record a central piece of his campaign, calling Engel out for his "hawkish and costly foreign policy agenda" and for "[accepting] donations from corporations and arms manufacturers" — and it worked. In a surprise upset, Engel lost the primary and with it, the

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chairmanship. Bowman realized that he could capitalize on Engel's perceived foreign policy chops by turning his record against him. As our Executive Director Stephen Miles [writes](#): "It's bad politics for Democrats to be hawkish on foreign policy."

## What do we need of an HFAC chair?

With Engel out, House Democrats have a chance to prove that they recognize the [changing times](#) by selecting someone who will advance a peaceful, progressive vision of U.S. foreign policy. That's why Win Without War joined 69 other organizations in [urging](#) that the new HFAC chair be someone committed to:

1. Ending our endless wars;
2. Opposing militarization and surveillance at home;
3. Putting diplomacy first;
4. Opposing regime change and scrutinizing non-electoral transfers of power;
5. Opposing broad-based sanctions that harm civilians;
6. Supporting a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
7. Building a global economy that prioritizes people and planet over corporate profit;
8. Ending the rubber stamp of arms sales;
9. Independence from special interests; and
10. Welcoming migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, and eliminating the root causes of forced displacement.

## Who's running?

So far, three members of Congress have announced their candidacy for the seat. In the coming weeks, we will take a deeper dive into each of their records. In the meantime, here they are, in their own words:

- [Rep. Joaquin Castro \(D-TX\)](#)
- [Rep. Gregory Meeks \(D-NY\)](#)
- [Rep. Brad Sherman \(D-CA\)](#)

## How should we choose?

It's not just about the end result. This race is also a test of *how* Democrats think foreign policy should be made. The process of selecting a new chair has historically been opaque, determined through a mix of seniority, party and special interest pressure, and backroom dealing. This time, it should be different. A decision that will have major consequences for U.S. foreign policy should be made out in the open: in a process that's transparent, democratic, and accessible.

That's why *today* — *Friday, August 28* — at 2pm EST [Now This](#) and [The Appeal](#), featuring Win Without War and [Demand Progress](#), are hosting a candidate forum with Rep. Joaquin Castro. While the other two candidates declined to attend, this is a valuable opportunity to hear straight from Rep. Castro why he's running for HFAC chair, what he would bring to the position, and

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whether he is willing to lead House democrats toward a principled, progressive foreign policy. [Will you join us?](#) (Streaming will go live on this page at 2pm EST)

THE  
BRIEFING

## HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIR FORUM

A forum hosted by The Appeal and NowThis featuring a representative from both Demand Progress and Win Without War



**Joaquin Castro**  
U.S. Representative  
for Texas' 20th  
Congressional District



**Gregory Meeks**  
U.S. Representative  
for New York's 5th  
Congressional District  
**DECLINED TO ATTEND**



**Brad Sherman**  
U.S. Representative  
for California's 30th  
Congressional District  
**DECLINED TO ATTEND**



HOSTED BY



**Jay Willis**  
Senior Contributor  
for The Appeal

LIVE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 1PM CT / 2PM ET



@AppealNews



@theappeal

### The Grassroots Demands Change

Most chair races pass by with hardly a public debate. This time, things will be different. Almost **15,000** grassroots activists have [signed](#) our petition to ensure that the next HFAC will promote a peaceful, progressive foreign policy. And in preparation for the forum, Win Without War activists submitted over **900** questions that they want HFAC chair candidates to answer.

These were the most common:

- How will you ensure that our foreign policy prioritizes diplomacy over confrontation?
- What will you do to help rid the world of the danger of nuclear weapons?
- Will you resist the influence of the right-wing Israeli lobby and promote justice for Palestinians?
- What will you do to reorient our militarized foreign policy and *end endless wars*?

### BURIED LEDES

The brutal police shooting of Jacob Blake and subsequent murder of two protestors allegedly by a [17-yr-old white nationalist](#) has sparked a new round of anti-racist protest.

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We reaffirm our unequivocal [support](#) for the protestors and [strikers](#) against the racist state violence that permeates the U.S.'s' domestic and [foreign policies](#).

**The Caribbean and Gulf Coast have [faced](#) two deadly hurricanes, nearly at once**, causing power outages, chemical spills, and dozens of deaths. Our hearts go out to all of the victims. But we can't stop at sympathy — we need *action* to end the fossil fuel regime and confront the climate crisis.

**U.S. servicemembers [sustained](#) minor injuries in a skirmish with Russian forces in Syria.** The [question](#) is: why do we even have U.S. troops there, risking such conflict in the first place? One piece of the answer: to [plunder](#) oil.

Joe Biden advisor and likely future defense secretary **Michèle Flournoy argued that the United States should develop the capacity to “sink the entire Chinese Navy within 72 hours.”** Make no mistake: the new Cold War is bipartisan. It must be resisted.

**Missing Fort Hood soldier Elder Fernandes has been [found](#) dead** — one more lost life in a [long, devastating line](#) of abuse, sexual assault, and murders at the base. We support our partners at Vets for the People as they [call](#) to #ShutDownFortHood.

**“Facebook [chose](#) not to act on militia complaints before Kenosha shooting.”** The headline says it all.

Abandon neoliberalism. Fund public services. Cancel Global South debt. End tax evasion. Ensure a COVID-19 vaccine is free to all. End deadly sanctions. **These, and more, are the [principles](#) of a *just* global recovery**, from Friends of the Earth International.

And finally, tired of getting your news in boring old prose? **This [Twitter account](#) turns the big news stories of the day into limericks.**