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Key U.S. Senator Calls For New "Truman Committee" to Oversee Iraq and Afghanistan War Efforts

Just three days after the *New York Times* reported on concerns about unprecedented outsourcing of government functions to private contractors, Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) [calls for a special committee to oversee the Iraq and Afghanistan war efforts](#) in a paper published in the *Harvard Law and Policy Review*. Senator Schumer argues that *robust oversight is especially important in wartime*, and he calls for a new "Truman Committee . . . to seek out corruption and waste for the betterment of the war effort as a whole."

As Senator Schumer explains in his paper, the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program (commonly known as the Truman Committee), was created on the initiative of then-Senator Harry Truman to ensure that defense contracts were being "fairly allocated within the country." This committee engaged in vigorous "trouble-shooting" of the Second World War, issuing more than 50 reports, conducting 432 public hearings, and holding 300 executive sessions examining a wide range of issues relating to conduct of the War. Nevertheless, as Senator Schumer argues, the Truman Committee *strengthened* President Roosevelt's ability to wage war:

The important historical lesson is this: the aggressive work of the Truman Committee did not imperil the Presidency, upset the separation of powers, or undermine the war effort. Rather, it provided constructive criticism, benefited the treasury, and built public confidence in the military apparatus. And, it bears repeating, a Democratic Senator led this Committee to do work critical of a President belonging to his own party.

ACS is also pleased to provide the following resources on Congressional power in wartime:

- A published briefing, entitled [The Congress as Surge Protector](#), by Professor Neil Kinkopf of Georgia State University. Professor Kinkopf argues that the Congress has broad power to regulate the war effort, including the power to forbid President Bush from escalating the Iraq War. Kinkopf served as a constitutional advisor to the Clinton Administration from 1993 to 1997.
- [Streaming video of an ACS-sponsored briefing](#), in which former advisors to both Democratic and Republican Presidents discussed Congress' power to limit the Commander-in-Chief.
- [A partial transcript](#) of this discussion, as well as [video of this short excerpt](#). The exchange features a debate between former Clinton Administration official Chris Schroeder, and David Rivkin, advisor to the Reagan and George H.W. Bush Administrations. Their discussion provides a window into the competing

viewpoints on this issue.

The Harvard Law & Policy Review (HLPR) is published twice annually and serves as the official journal of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy. The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy (ACS) is one of the nation's leading progressive legal organizations. Founded in 2001, ACS is a rapidly growing network of lawyers, law students, scholars, judges, policymakers and other concerned individuals. Our mission is to ensure that fundamental principles of human dignity, individual rights and liberties, genuine equality, and access to justice enjoy their rightful, central place in American law. The views of speakers are their own and should not be attributed to ACS. For more information about the organization, which has established student chapters at over 150 law schools around the country and lawyer chapters in over 25 cities, please visit www.acslaw.org.

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