

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S. RES.** \_\_\_\_\_

Expressing the vital importance of the Panama Canal to the United States.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. LEE submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the  
Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**RESOLUTION**

Expressing the vital importance of the Panama Canal to  
the United States.

Whereas early efforts of the Colombian government and  
French investors to construct a canal across Panama  
were unsuccessful and resulted in bankruptcy by 1889;

Whereas, as a condition of United States Government sup-  
port for Panama's independence from Colombia, includ-  
ing the positioning of United States troops in the then-  
territory of Panama, the United States was to be assured  
access to construct and control a canal in perpetuity, an  
agreement that culminated in the Hay-Bunau-Varilla  
Treaty, signed at Washington November 18, 1903;

Whereas the Panama Canal was never initiated, engineered,  
or built by the Panamanian government;

Whereas the United States Government funded, pioneered, and built the Panama Canal over a 10-year period from 1904 to 1914, at a cost of \$375,000,000 and 10,000 lives, and raised the canal above sea level through construction of a lock system;

Whereas, historically, the Panama Canal has been distinct from the sovereign territory of Panama;

Whereas the Panama Canal serves as a vital connection between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, connecting the east and west coasts of the United States and providing passage for more than 14,000 vessels in 2023;

Whereas approximately 72 percent of vessels traveling through the Panama Canal are traveling to or from United States ports;

Whereas, without the Panama Canal, vessels would have to pass through the notoriously dangerous Cape Horn, extending transit by nearly 8,000 miles;

Whereas, in 1977, President Carter surrendered United States control over the Panama Canal in a series of treaties with Panama known as the “Torrijos-Carter Treaties”;

Whereas one of those treaties, the Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal, signed at Washington September 7, 1977, otherwise known as the “Neutrality Treaty”, reserved the right of the United States to use armed force to defend the permanent neutrality of the Panama Canal;

Whereas, for nearly a decade, the People’s Republic of China has steadily increased its footprint in the Panama Canal;

Whereas, in 2016, Panama ceded control of Margarita Island, the Panama Canal’s largest Atlantic port, to the

People's Republic of China-affiliated Landbridge Group in a \$900,000,000 agreement;

Whereas, in 2018, Panama entered into a \$1,400,000,000 agreement for the China Communications Construction Company and the China Harbor Engineering Company to construct the fourth bridge across the Panama Canal;

Whereas CK Hutchison Holdings, based in Hong Kong, manages two of the Panama Canal's five ports, including the Balboa port along the Pacific and Cristobal port along the Atlantic;

Whereas the rapid acceleration of Chinese influence in the Panama Canal poses a high risk of intelligence-gathering and surveillance by the People's Republic of China;

Whereas Chinese law requires the assets of civilian firms to be made available to support the armed forces of the People's Republic of China;

Whereas the Panama Canal would serve as a logistics point between the east and west coasts of the United States in the event of a conflict involving United States Armed Forces, cementing its value to homeland and hemispheric defense; and

Whereas the ability of the People's Republic of China to control major entry and exit points of the Panama Canal would provide the People's Republic of China with a significant military advantage relevant to United States Armed Forces in the event of a conflict: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2               (1) recognizes the ingenuity and labor of Ameri-  
3       cans that made the Panama Canal possible for fu-

1       ture generations, with special regard for those Amer-  
2       icans who lost their lives in pursuit of the Panama  
3       Canal project;

4               (2) expresses that the Panama Canal is vital to  
5       United States regional security, hemispheric hegem-  
6       ony, and economic interests;

7               (3) assesses that a pattern of Chinese-backed  
8       investment in port infrastructure and canal oper-  
9       ations in Panama constitutes a violation of the Neu-  
10      trality Treaty; and

11              (4) urges the Trump administration to ensure  
12      that the canal remains neutral and to take all appro-  
13      priate measures to enforce the Neutrality Treaty.