

Sixty-fifth Congress of the United States of America;

At the First Session,

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the second day of April,  
one thousand nine hundred and seventeen.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Declaring that a state of war exists between the Imperial German Government  
and the Government and the people of the United States and making  
provision to prosecute the same.

Whereas the Imperial German Government has committed repeated acts of  
war against the Government and the people of the United States of  
America: Therefore be it

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States  
of America in Congress assembled, That the state of war between the United  
States and the Imperial German Government which has thus been thrust upon  
the United States is hereby formally declared; and that the President be, and  
he is hereby, authorized and directed to employ the entire naval and military  
forces of the United States and the resources of the Government to carry on war  
against the Imperial German Government; and to bring the conflict to a  
successful termination all of the resources of the country are hereby pledged by  
the Congress of the United States.*

*Champ Clark*

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*Thos. R. Marshall*

*Vice President of the United States and  
President of the Senate.*

*approved 5 April, 1917*

*Woodrow Wilson*

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~~ADDRESS.~~

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONGRESS:

I have called the Congress into extraordinary session because there are serious, very serious, choices of policy to be made, and made immediately, which it was neither right nor constitutionally permissible that I should assume the responsibility of making.

On the third of February last I officially laid before you the extraordinary announcement of the Imperial German Government that on and after the first day of February it was its purpose to put aside all restraints of law or of humanity and use its submarines to sink every vessel that sought to approach either the ports of Great Britain and Ireland or the western coasts of Europe or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean. That had seemed to be the object of the German submarine warfare earlier in the war, but since April of last year the Imperial Government had somewhat restrained the commanders of its undersea craft in conformity with its promise then given to us that passenger boats should not be sunk and that due warning would be given to all other vessels which its submarines might seek to destroy, when no resistance was offered or escape attempted, and care taken that their crews were given at least a fair chance to save their lives in their open boats. The precautions taken were meagre and haphazard enough, as was proved in distressing instance after instance in the progress of the cruel and unmanly business, but a certain degree of restraint was observed. The new policy has swept every restriction aside. Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with safe conduct through the proscribed areas by the German Government itself and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion or of principle.

I was for a little while unable to believe that such things would in fact be done by any government that had hitherto subscribed to the