

Sen. Durbin Reaffirms Support For Ukraine's Freedom To Chart Its Own Future

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WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today reiterated that the United States stands with Ukraine and the surrounding countries against increasing Russian aggression. During his speech, Durbin reflected on the contributions of Ukrainian-Americans such as Sgt. Michael Strank, a Marine who fought in WWII and one of the Iwo Jima flag raisers. Durbin also condemned Russian leader Vladimir Putin's actions, including ongoing belligerence against NATO allies in the Baltics and Poland.

“The Ukrainian people have made it clear: They want to be free and independent, they want to chart their own future, they want to choose their own leaders in the elections that they conduct,” Durbin said. “This is the future that more than 92 percent of Ukrainians chose in a referendum in 1991, after Ukraine declared its independence from the crumbling and corrupt Soviet Union. But Russian President Vladimir Putin—the old K.G.B. agent—refuses to acknowledge Ukraine’s right to exist, its right to independence, and its right to self-determination.”

Durbin, a Co-Chair of the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus, went on to state that an invasion of Ukraine would also disrupt the peace with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and surrounding countries. This week, Durbin and Senator Grassley led 17 of their Senate colleagues in introducing a bipartisan resolution to celebrate 100 years of diplomatic relations with the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The resolution also reaffirms the United States’ commitment to NATO amid increasing Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, which he noted in his speech.

Durbin continued, “Whether Putin is driven by megalomaniacal delusions of restoring the Soviet Union or is simply seeking to create chaos and sow dissension among NATO allies is unclear. But here is what’s clear: a Russian invasion of Ukraine would constitute a grave assault not only on Ukraine, but on the institutions and agreements that have kept the peace in Europe for almost 75 years. A Russian invasion of Ukraine also could be seen as a danger to our NATO allies in Poland, and in the courageous young Baltic democracies in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It would be a catastrophic mistake on Putin’s part.”

Durbin then reaffirmed both the Administration’s and the United States Senate’s support for Ukraine. He praised legislation being drafted by Senators Menendez and Risch, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that will impose severe sanctions on Russia for any further invasion of Ukraine.

“I commend President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and their teams for their strong support of Ukrainian independence and to fight Russian aggression,” Durbin continued. “The Biden Administration has provided significant military equipment for our Ukrainian friends to ensure that President Putin knows the price that a further invasion will cost. The Administration has also bolstered the defense capabilities of our NATO partners in Poland and the Baltics.”

Durbin concluded, “Seventy-seven years ago, an American Marine born in Ukraine raised the American flag on Iwo Jima. Today, a generation of young Ukrainians raised

in freedom are holding high the yellow-and-blue flag of their own nation and saying: We too want to be free. Our message to them is very simple and straight forward: You are not alone.”