



Durbin Hosts OSF's Chris Manson For Biden's State Of Union Address After His Ukraine Ambulance Work

by Tim Ditman
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WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Co-Chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, had Chris Manson as his guest for President Biden's State of the Union Address. Chris, who is Vice President of Government Relations for OSF HealthCare in Peoria, Illinois, and founder of U.S. Ambulances for Ukraine, has helped deliver 28 ambulances and one fire engine to Ukraine and works with volunteers across Illinois to collect hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of medical supplies, clothing, and nonperishable food for the Ukrainian people amid Putin's illegal war.



In October, Durbin saw firsthand the vehicles and goods that Chris helped deliver to Ukraine at a Chicago-area warehouse. Durbin's office has helped Chris and his group connect with a variety of governmental and nongovernmental groups to help with their notable effort.

"Chris's story is an inspiration to us all and really proves no matter where you are in the world, you can always find ways to help," said Durbin. "Amid Putin's unjustified and unproved war, the Ukrainian people need our help to get basic necessities such as food, water, clothing, and much more. I'm honored to say Chris answered their prayers and is my guest for President Biden's State of the Union Address. He represents the best of humanity, and is a symbol of hope during a brutal war. I applaud Chris's heroic actions and stand ready to assist him and his colleagues in any way I can. The barbarity of Putin's war must come to an end."

"To date, US Ambulances for Ukraine has delivered 28 ambulances and 1 fire engine to Ukraine. I am proud to say this is an Illinois-led effort, with 8 of the ambulances and the fire engine coming from Illinois," said Manson. "Traveling to Ukraine is not an easy task. Senator Durbin's office has been an important ally from the beginning with offers of assistance, whether by helping make contact in the US with various government agencies or when I have been overseas and in need of assistance. It was a pleasure to host the Senator at the UA Resistance Foundation warehouse in October when he signed the fire engine we turned over to the Fire Fighters of Mykolaiv, Ukraine, in late January. I am very honored and appreciative of the invitation to attend the State of the Union as Senator Durbin's guest.

"I am eternally grateful to my employer, OSF HealthCare, which has allowed me the flexibility to pursue this effort in addition to donating lifesaving supplies. The donors of the ambulances and fire engines deserve a special thank you along with groups like UA Resistance Foundation, the Ukrainian Medical Association of North America and Rotary International which have all supported this effort."

Durbin is a tireless leader for Ukraine in the United States Senate. As Co-Chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, he frequently hosts member of the Ukrainian Parliament to better understand how the U.S. Senate can continue to support our ally through military, economic, and humanitarian assistance. He recently [hosted](#) Ukrainian Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin to receive an update on Putin's unprovoked war in Ukraine, and specifically on reports of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S., Oksana Markarova, and President of Ukraine's Supreme Court, Vsevolod Kniaziev, were also in attendance.

Durbin's bipartisan, bicameral *Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act* was [signed into law](#) by President Biden. The legislation updates the current war crimes statute to enable

prosecution of war criminals in the United States regardless of the nationality of the perpetrator or victim. The bill also extends the statute of limitations for certain war crimes. Durbin-authored legislation restricting U.S. recognition of any Russian forcibly annexed areas of Ukraine also passed as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 *National Defense Authorization Act*. Durbin also helped secure more than \$45 billion in emergency funding for the Ukraine war in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 omnibus appropriations bill.

Chris Manson

Chris Manson was at home with his 7-year old daughter when he got the idea to use his connections in Illinois to help the people of Ukraine. Chris contacted the Ukrainian consulate to inquire if his family could help by providing medical supplies, which then led to the culminated of ambulances filled with medical supplies and clothing loaded onto a 747 jet at Chicago's O'Hare Airport on March 29, bound for Ukraine via Luxembourg and Poland. Chris has worked with Peoria-based Advanced Medical Transport (AMT), OSF Healthcare, the Peoria Fire Department, and OSF Mission Partners, and others to ensure the ambulances were safely delivered to Ukraine. Chris has traveled to Ukraine four times since April 2022.

By Decree of the President of Ukraine, Chris was awarded the Cross of Ivan Mazepa in August for his efforts. At the recommendation of the Regional Governor of The Rivne Regional Administration, he was awarded a commendation from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Valery Zaluzhny for his assistance to the Ukrainian army. He is the first foreigner to receive this award from the Ukrainian Military. Chris served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves and is a volunteer firefighter.