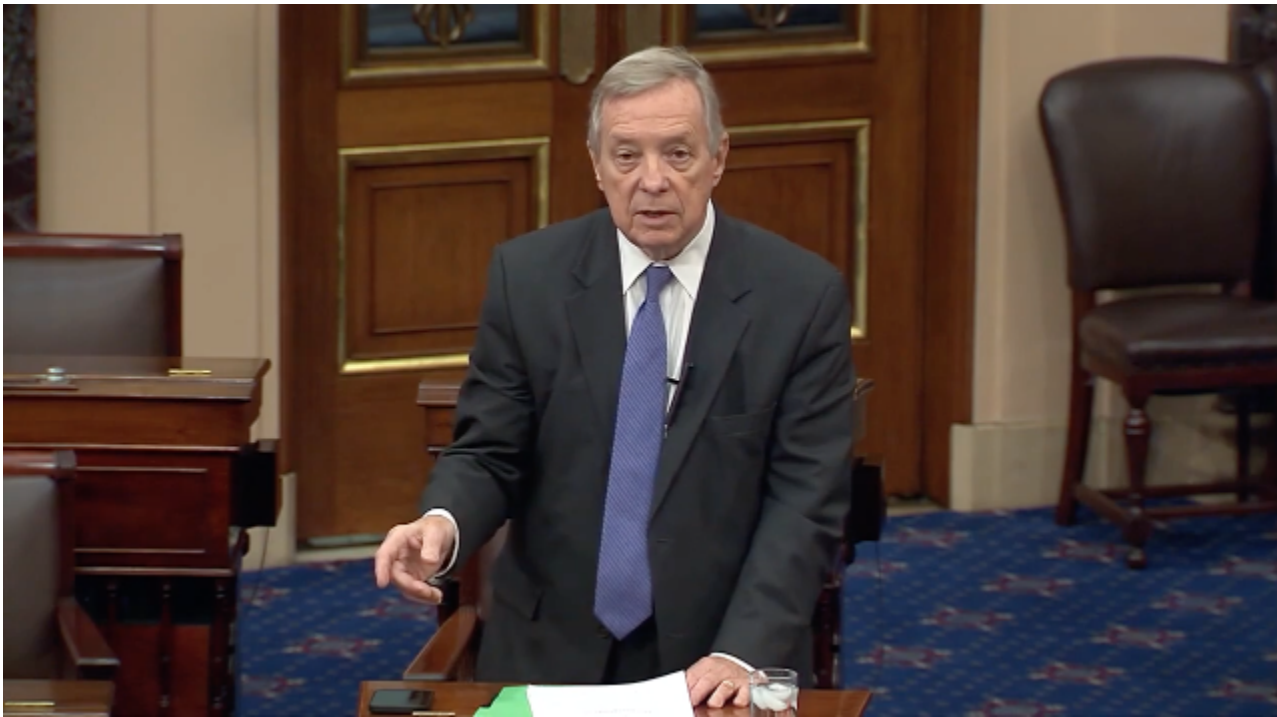


Durbin, Members Of The Baltic Freedom Caucus Host Baltic Leaders In The Senate

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) Co-Chair of the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus, met with Speakers of the Baltic countries and their ambassadors to discuss continued efforts to strengthen U.S. security cooperation with the Baltics, support Ukraine, and defend against increasing Russian and Chinese belligerence. Durbin was joined by U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Bob Menendez (D-NJ).

The Senators met with Lauri Hussar, President of the Riigikogu of Estonia; Daiga Mierina, Speaker of Saeima of Latvia; Viktorija Cmilyte-Nielsen, Speaker of Seimas of

Lithuania; Kristjan Prikk, Ambassador of Estonia to the U.S.; Maris Selga, Ambassador of Latvia to the U.S.; and Audra Plepyte, Ambassador of Lithuania to the U.S.

“Not only do I have strong personal ties to the region, but the Baltic countries are essential NATO partners in upholding democratic values and transatlantic security,” said Durbin. “The Baltics are among Ukraine’s staunchest supporters—and the United States must continue to do its part to stand alongside them. I also remain steadfast in my support for the Baltic States as they work to combat Russian aggression as well as Chinese economic pressure.”

“Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are steadfast NATO allies who have shown remarkable leadership in the face of Russian aggression. These nations stand resolutely on the side of democracy, having experienced the horrors of authoritarianism within living memory,” said Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Co-Chair of the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus. “As co-chair of the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus, I welcome the speakers of the Baltic parliaments to Capitol Hill and look forward to our nations’ continued collaboration in defense of freedom.”

A photo of the meeting is available [here](#).

Last year, Durbin and Grassley introduced the *Baltic Security Initiative Act*, bipartisan and bicameral legislation to effectively codify the Baltic Security Initiative, which will enhance and strengthen U.S. security cooperation with the Baltics amid Russia’s unprovoked war in Ukraine and heightened tensions with China. U.S. Representatives Don Bacon (R-NE-02) and Ruben Gallego (D-AZ-03) introduced companion legislation in the House.

In the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) omnibus appropriations bill, Durbin secured \$225 million to fund the Baltic Security Initiative along with \$153 million for security cooperation programs, with a particular focus on European allies in light of Russia’s aggression. The FY 2024 *National Defense Authorization Act* also included a Durbin provision requiring a report on sustained U.S. security assistance for the Baltics.

In 2022, Durbin traveled to Vilnius, Lithuania, where he [received](#) the Aleksandras Stulginskis Star Award—only the second individual and first American to receive this award. It was granted to Durbin for his decades-long support of Lithuanian independence and democracy and his promotion of parliamentary values. He was in Vilnius two years ago on the morning Russia launched its renewed invasion of Ukraine.