

# Durbin Calls Out Legislators For Abandoning Aid To Ukraine Following Death Of Navalny

February 27 2024 1:27 PM

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Co-Chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, today took to the Senate floor to deliver a speech emphasizing the necessity of delivering aid to Ukraine as it continues to fend off attacks from Vladimir Putin and following the tragic death of Russian opposition leader and anticorruption activist, Alexei Navalny. Durbin's speech comes after the Senate passed the national security supplemental with strong bipartisan support, which provides aid for Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, and Taiwan. During his speech, Durbin slammed House Republicans for their refusal to take up the bill.



“Just before our recent recess, the Senate overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan aid package, notably to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia. Ukraine has fought a heroic, historic, battle to defend its independence and democracy, thwarting a full-scale Russian invasion two years ago and showing the world how to stand up to a bully like Vladimir Putin. In fact, its resistance to Russia has major security impacts and benefits for our larger western security. But as everyone in Congress knows, Ukraine urgently needs more weapons and assistance and needs it now. Our European allies approved their aid earlier this month. But despite European and U.S. Senate support, many almost unbelievable events have occurred over the past few weeks that endanger Ukrainian chances at success and global security,” Durbin said.

Durbin went on to emphasize that delays in the House are feeding into Putin’s tyranny, allowing him to make further advances as Ukraine waits for foreign aid. Likewise, House Republicans are making decisions based on former President Donald Trump’s comments, who previously told Republicans to oppose the initial bipartisan supplemental agreement.

“The House of Representatives has remained passive, detached, silent for the past two weeks on the Senate-passed national security supplemental bill, with its leadership subservient to Donald Trump who, in turn, is just enamored, a real bromance with Vladimir Putin. Last week, true to form, former President Trump went as far as to encourage Russia to attack fellow NATO members,” Durbin continued. “Furthermore, on the global stage, public reports have suggested that Putin is thinking of putting some kind of nuclear weapon in space... And amidst all of this, Russian opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, died in a Russian gulag prison just before a sham election in which Putin is afraid of any real competition.”

In response to Navalny’s death, Trump sank to a new low, shamefully comparing it to his own self-inflicted legal problems.

“Why would Trump-beholden Republicans fawn over Putin, a wanted war criminal responsible for kidnapping 20,000 Ukrainian children and taking them to Russia—a stunning number that is likely far higher. Or imagine the scene shared by my colleague from Hawaii—that of Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines checking their phones to see whether House Republicans passed our Ukrainian aid package... These soldiers are fighting with their lives for democracy and security in Europe while House Republicans do nothing. It’s time for House Republicans to pass this urgently needed aid package without further delay,” Durbin continued.

Durbin then spoke about Navalny and patriotic Russian opposition leader, Vladimir Kara-Murza, who Putin tried to poison twice. Durbin previously met Kara-Murza in his office two years ago—before he returned to Russia. During their meeting, Durbin asked

Kara-Murza if he was sure about returning to Russia, given the certain arrest that would await him. Without hesitation, he told Durbin he had to return and continue the flight.

“Not long after his return, was arrested for criticizing Putin’s war in Ukraine. He showed the same kind of patriotic courage as his compatriot, Alexei Navalny,” said Durbin. “Navalny, Kara-Murza, and the Ukrainians on the front lines are brave patriots in this world—heroes Congress should look to for inspiration and courage instead of a resort in Florida known as Mar-a-Lago.”

Today, Durbin and U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA) introduced legislation to rename a section of the street near the Russian Ambassador to the United States’ residence as “Alexei Navalny Way.” During his speech, Durbin called on his colleagues to pass the legislation to honor his legacy.

Durbin concluded, “But unlike the hooded Putin thugs trying to erase Navalny’s memory by arresting mourners and quickly removing flowers left at makeshift memorials, it will force Russian diplomats in Washington to be reminded every day of their crimes. I hope Congress will quickly pass this symbolically important measure and in a larger tribute to Navalny, our Ukrainian allies, and the thousands of kidnapped Ukrainian children—pass the supplemental without further delay.”

In 2021, Durbin joined a group of bipartisan Senators to introduce the *Holding Russia Accountable for Malign Activities Act of 2021*, a targeted bill that would impose sanctions on Russian officials complicit in brazen violations of international law, including the poisoning and imprisonment of Mr. Navalny. Durbin also cosponsored the *Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act*. Some of the recognitions Mr. Navalny has received include: the 2015 Prize of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, nomination for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize, the 2021 Boris Nemtsov Prize for Courage, the 2021 Moral Courage Award by the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy, the 2021 Knight of Freedom Award by the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, and the 2021 Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament. The Senate previously passed Durbin’s bipartisan [resolution](#) honoring Kara-Murza. The resolution pays tribute to his advocacy for human rights in Russia and support for the anti-war movement.