

The Federal Government Should Not be Held Hostage for Ukraine Funding. Senator Rand Paul

Simply put: We have no extra money to send to Ukraine.

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Today I am putting leadership of the House, the Senate, and the President of the United States on notice. I will not consent to the expedited passage of any spending measure providing more American aid to Ukraine.

Simply put: We have no extra money to send to Ukraine. Our deficit this year will exceed \$1.5 trillion. Borrowing money from China to send to Ukraine makes no sense.

Since the beginning of Russia's war in Ukraine, the American taxpayer has provided Kiev \$113 billion. Over the 583 days of war between February 24, 2022 and the end of this month, that average will come to \$6.8 billion per month—or \$223 million per day.

This week, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky is in Washington to lobby Congress to approve the Biden administration's \$24 billion supplemental aid request.

When will the aid requests end? When will the war end? Can someone explain what victory in Ukraine looks like? President Biden certainly can't. His administration has failed to articulate a clear strategy or objective in this war, and Ukraine's long-awaited counter-offensive has failed to make meaningful gains in the east.

With no clear end in sight, it looks increasingly likely that Ukraine will be yet another endless quagmire funded by the American taxpayer. That's why public support for the war is waning. A CNN poll from August shows that a majority of Americans now oppose Congress authorizing additional funding to Ukraine.

The Senate leadership of both parties know this. That's why they are trying to hold the

federal government hostage by inserting the \$24 billion aid request in a continuing resolution: to force our hand. Either we fund an endless war in Ukraine or the uniparty will shut down the federal government and make the American people suffer.

This is a clear dereliction of duty, and I will not stand for it. My colleagues: As representatives of the American people, you should not stand for it. The bill that comes before us should be about funding our own government, not anyone else's. I will do everything in my power to block a bill that includes funding for Ukraine.

As elected officials, we have an obligation to pursue a foreign policy that advances the security and prosperity of the American people. Funneling billions of dollars into the meatgrinder in eastern Ukraine does neither.

The longer this conflict continues, the greater the risk that miscalculation or purposeful escalation draws the United States into direct conflict with Russia. Russia's military may have a bloody nose, but Moscow still maintains the largest nuclear arsenal in the world. Let's not pretend that American involvement in this war comes without risks.

If that's not bad enough, Senate leadership has prevented the implementation of effective oversight mechanisms to ensure that hard-earned American tax dollars don't fall prey to waste, fraud, and abuse. As a result, besides the colossal costs of the war, we will end up paying a corruption tax.

Unfortunately, corruption runs deep in Ukraine, and there's plenty of evidence that it has run rampant since Russia's invasion. As Zelensky landed in New York earlier this week, we learned that corruption concerns in Ukraine's Ministry of Defense resulted in the firing of six deputy defense ministers. This comes two weeks after the firing of Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov, who was removed after it was discovered that the Ministry of Defense had mishandled military contracts.

Last month, Zelensky fired all twenty-four regional military recruitment chiefs because they were "involved in illegal activities, including enrichment."

Last October, we learned that U.S. shipments of grenade launchers, machine guns, rifles, bulletproof vests, and thousands of rounds of ammunition, were ending up in the hands of criminal gangs and weapons traffickers posing as humanitarian aid organizations.

What are we doing? Is this fair to the American people? Millions of Americans are struggling each day to make ends meet. Millions of Americans are struggling to provide for their families and put food on the table. Can we honestly look our constituents in the eye and tell them that this is a good investment of their tax dollars?

Some say it's to save democracy. They should be honest with themselves and the rest of us. Ukraine is far from a shining example of democracy. While the strain of wartime can make for questionable government actions, we must approach these cases with a critical eye; after all, we have to live with them when or if the war is ever over. As if to prove a point, for all the platitudes about America supporting democracy, Ukraine, the biggest recipient of American welfare, has canceled the nation's next presidential election.

At the end of the day, this isn't about what Ukraine is or isn't with respect to its form of government. This is all about our interests and our national security. Every day this war

continues is another spin of the roulette wheel with another chance of it stopping on Armageddon. And we are paying for the privilege. We cannot continue business as usual. We cannot keep putting the needs of other countries above our own. We cannot save Ukraine by dooming the American economy. And we certainly cannot save Ukraine by fighting a war with Russia.

No matter how sympathetic we are to the Ukrainian people, my oath of office requires me to put the American people first. I encourage my colleagues to oppose any effort to hold the federal government hostage for Ukraine funding.

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Rand Paul serves as the junior United States senator from Kentucky.

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