



## DEMOCRATS JOIN FORCES WITH HOUSE SPEAKER MIKE JOHNSON TO PASS LONG-STALLED BIPARTISAN UKRAINE, ISRAEL AND TAIWAN AID PACKAGE – PASSAGE IN SENATE EXPECTED NEXT WEEK

- The House has approved four unbundled bills providing for critical aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, as well as a package of new sanctions. The total package is worth \$95 billion.
- Each of the bills passed on a bipartisan basis with significant support from Democrats, without which none would have passed. On Ukraine aid, all Democrats voted in favor, and more Republicans voted against than in favor.
- Speaker Mike Johnson is credited for putting his job on the line in allowing the bills on Friday to move forward, paving the way for Saturday's votes. His right flank remains defiant.
- The sanctions bill contains provisions (the REPO Act) that authorize the President to seize frozen Russian government assets in US banks and transfer them ultimately for the benefit of Ukraine. The sanctions bill also sets the stage for the potential banning of TikTok.
- Ukraine faces a make-or-break moment on the battlefield and is desperate for the long-stalled aid. The aid package is expected to pass the Senate and be signed into law this week.

The House of Representatives has approved a \$95 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and US allies in the Indo-Pacific. After months of resisting putting the foreign aid package to a vote on the House floor, Speaker Mike Johnson, putting his speakership in potential jeopardy, defied the radical wing of his party and joined forces with Democrats on Friday to advance a vote on the package, presented in an unconventional form of four unbundled bills.<sup>1</sup> The aid for Ukraine is a much needed lifeline that comes at a critical (some have said “make-or-break”) moment in Ukraine’s defense against Russia’s invasion.

On Saturday, in a rare weekend vote, the aid package, consisting of three separate bills that provide close to \$61 billion for Ukraine (the [Ukraine Security Supplemental Appropriations Act](#)),<sup>2</sup> \$17 billion for Israel and \$9 billion for humanitarian assistance for civilians in war zones, including Gaza (the [Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act](#)), and \$8.1 billion for allies in the Indo-Pacific (the [Indo-Pacific Security Supplemental Appropriations Act](#)), passed in the House. On Ukraine aid, the most contentious element of the foreign aid package, 210 Democrats and 101 Republicans voted in favor, with a majority of Republicans (112) and no Democrats voting against.<sup>3</sup> Just before the vote, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi

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<sup>1</sup> The procedural vote to advance the bills was 316-94. Typically, votes of this kind are passed by the majority alone.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the appropriations fund replenishment of US weapons stockpiles, with approximately 20% going directly to Ukraine in the form of loans.

<sup>3</sup> Aid to Indo-Pacific allies passed with 207 Democrats joining with 178 Republicans voting in favor (no Democrats and 34 Republicans voted against) and aid to Israel and humanitarian aid passed with 173 Democrats joining with 193 Republicans voting in favor (37 Democrats and 21 Republicans voted against). The sanctions bill passed with 174 Democrats joining 186



was crystal clear in her plea, “I hope our colleagues will choose democracy and decency rather than autocracy and evil because I fear if you choose the Putin route, you will have blood on your hands . . . .”

The three bills, together with a fourth providing for sanctions, including sanctions on Iran and a ban on TikTok should it not be sold within 270 days (subject to a 90-day extension if requested by the President) (the [21st Century Peace through Strength Act](#)),<sup>4</sup> now head to the Senate as a single package.<sup>5</sup> The Senate is expected to begin voting on the foreign aid package when it returns on Tuesday. The Senate passed its \$95 billion supplemental aid bill on a bipartisan basis in February (79 to 29, with 22 Republicans voting in favor).

The last tranche of aid for Ukraine was approved in December 2022, when Democrats controlled the House. According to a [report](#) by the Council on Foreign Relations, between January 24, 2022 and January 15, 2024, the United States committed \$74.3 billion in bilateral aid. That flow ended when the Republicans assumed control of the House, and Donald Trump could more effectively exert his influence. The passage today of the Ukraine aid package in the House prompted a number of Democratic House members to wave Ukrainian flags, in turn prompting a rebuke from the Speaker.

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Republicans voting in favor (33 Democrats and 25 Republicans voted against). For a separate border security measure requiring a two-thirds majority to pass (the [Transnational Criminal Organization Illicit Spotter Prevention and Elimination Act](#)), 210 Republicans joined by five Democrats voted in favor, and 199 Democrats voted against, causing the bill to fail. (See [Washington Post voting breakdown](#)).

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene introduced an amendment to the Ukraine aid bill seeking to reduce the funding to zero. It failed on a vote of 351-71. Responding to praise from President Zelensky for the House and Mike Johnson personally, Greene had this to [say](#) about the Speaker: “Johnson once again passed a bill with the help of Democrats while the majority of the Republican majority voted against it. Not only is Mike Johnson a traitor to our conference, he’s a traitor to our country.” Not to be outdone, Rep. Lauren Boebert, reacting to Democrats waiving Ukrainian flags in the well of the House, tweeted “Such an embarrassing and disgusting show of America LAST politicians! You love Ukraine so much, get your ass over there and leave America’s governing to those who love THIS country!”

<sup>4</sup> As part of the legislation proposed by Rep. Michael McCaul, the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity for Ukrainians Act (the REPO Act) empowers the President to seize frozen Russian government assets sitting in US banks and to cause them to be transferred to a Ukraine Support Fund. The Ukraine Support Fund may be used by the State Department to compensate Ukraine for damages caused by the Russian invasion, or to support an international body or mechanism for reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Ukraine, humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian people or other purposes supporting the recovery of Ukraine and the welfare of the Ukrainian people. Note that the REPO Act only applies, [according](#) to Charles Lichfield (of the Atlantic Center), to less than \$10 billion of frozen assets; the bulk of the \$320 billion of frozen Russian government assets sits in Europe.

<sup>5</sup> The TikTok ban now stands a greater chance of passing as it is part of the foreign aid package sent to the Senate.



The House now adjourns for a week, which means that Speaker Johnson’s speakership remains safe for at least another week.<sup>6</sup> Speaker Johnson is under no illusion that his decision this week could be career-ending, though he may well have the support of Democrats to avoid the fate of his immediate predecessor, Kevin McCarthy. Speaking earlier this week to C-SPAN, Johnson was adamant that providing the aid to Ukraine was “critically important” and the “right thing to do.” He continued, “I am going to allow an opportunity for every single member of the House to vote their conscience and their will. I’m willing to take a personal risk for that, because we have to do the right thing. And history will judge us.”

### **Cold War Era Bipartisanship**

The monthslong delay in getting the aid package through the House and the failure of a majority of House Republicans to support it when it did get to the floor are stark reminders that today “bipartisanship” is a fragile commodity in Washington, and that a significant portion of the party that traditionally stood firmly against the encroachment by Russia, and before it the Soviet Union, against Western allies is prepared to shamelessly advance the agenda of Vladimir Putin. As Mike Lillis and Mychael Schnell, writing in *The Hill* (“[House approves aid for Ukraine, Israel after bitter battle](#)”), noted, “The debate [over aid to Ukraine] had split House Republicans into warring factions, pitting Reagan-minded traditionalists – who support strong interventions overseas to counter the imperial designs of Russia and China – against a newer brand of ‘America First’ conservative who fought to limit the foreign spending and focus instead on domestic problems, particularly the migrant crisis at the southern border.”

It was not always like this.

At an event in London recently, marking the second anniversary of the April 11, 2022 detention of Russian activist, dissident and political prisoner Vladimir Kara Murza, Kara-Murza’ wife Evgenia recalled the days when firm and forceful engagement with the Soviet Union was a bipartisan priority in Washington. She reminded us that both Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter successfully championed the exchange of political prisoners held in Soviet jails. This, former political prisoner Natan Sharansky recently [noted](#) in an op-ed in *The Economist* in which he urged the West to strengthen military deterrence on the borders with Russia, increase its support for Ukraine and develop a more forceful policy towards dissidents imprisoned in Russia, reflected an understanding on the part of Western politicians of “the scale of historical struggle” and that “the fate of Soviet political prisoners [was intimately bound up with] their own security.”

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<sup>6</sup> Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene introduced a motion to vacate last month, which has been joined by Rep. Thomas Massie and Rep. Paul Gossar. Greene did not force a vote yesterday on her motion to vacate, making reference to the benefit of colleagues returning home to hear from their constituents. At a Mar-a-Lago press conference on April 12, Trump said “he stands” with Johnson. That said, Trump has not criticized Greene or asked her to tone down her criticism of Johnson. *The Daily Best* [reported](#) last night that two sources close to Trump say Trump will not come to Johnson’s rescue. Trump has his hands full with his trial in Manhattan. That may place Johnson’s fate in the hands of Hakeem Jeffries and the Democratic caucus.



I cite this for two reasons.

The first is that the persecution of dissidents in Russia highlight how bankrupt the Putin regime has become. Speaking to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Evgenia Kara-Murza [summarized](#) the bill of particulars: Russian human rights organization Memorial estimates there are close to 700 political prisoners in Russia and media investigations estimate the number of Russians facing criminal or administrative sanction since 2018 for exercising free speech at around 116,000. There have been more political trials under Putin's fourth term than under Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev combined. Opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Alexei Navalny were slain. Speaking out against the war in Ukraine is harshly punished. In 2022, Vladimir Kara-Murza was arrested on charges of disobeying police orders, after which his detention was extended for "discrediting" the military. Last April, after denouncing Russia's aggression in Ukraine in addresses to the US Helsinki Commission and the Arizona House of Representatives, he was sentenced to 25 years in prison for treason.

Last April, on the first anniversary of Vladimir Kara-Murza's detention, a bipartisan group of 50 senators and 31 representatives [wrote](#) Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging that Vladimir Kara-Murza (who is also has the status of permanent resident in the United States) be given the designation of "unlawfully and wrongfully detained" under the [Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act](#) ("Levinson Act") and on the second anniversary of his detention a bipartisan group of 46 senators and 35 representatives [repeated](#) the request. Senator Tim Kaine and Representative Jennifer Wexton had [issued](#) a separate plea to President Biden in September citing the Levinson Act as well as Executive Order [14078](#).

The second reason is that, at a time when Russia has become not only a pariah on the global stage, but also poses a national security threat by targeting our upcoming elections, I remain bewildered that a wing of the Republican Party is doing Putin's bidding.

The request by the White House for additional aid to Ukraine was first [made](#) last October as part of a proposed \$105 billion security assistance package. [POLITICO](#) and [CNN](#) report that Speaker Johnson, facing the most consequential decision of his career and angry opposition from the right flank of his party, ultimately reversed course on aid and put it to a vote following dire intelligence reports that Putin's bet on outlasting the West support for Ukraine seemed to be paying off. [POLITICO](#) Opinion Editor Jamie Dettmer reported ("[Ukraine is heading for defeat](#)") this past week on dwindling supplies of ammunition and delays in Western aid, combined with relentless bombing campaigns, losses on the battlefield and lack of advanced weapons, are sapping morale among the frontline troops, as well as across senior ranks. The most urgent need is artillery shells, as well as air defense systems.

While Republicans opposed to aid to Ukraine have advanced various explanations, including their view that policy changes at the southern border should be prioritized, while others believe Europe should do more to aid the war effort, and for others concerns over accountability, it is hard not to conclude that the hostility of the right wing of the party to Ukraine aid is a direct result of Donald Trump's affinity for Putin and longstanding anger



directed at Zelensky for not playing along with his 2019 gift to hold back weapons deliveries pending dirt on Joe Biden that would ultimately lead to his first impeachment.<sup>7</sup>

During an interview on CNN's State of the Union, House Intelligence Committee Chair Mike Turner [conceded](#) that "we see directly coming from Russia attempts to mask communications that are anti-Ukraine and pro-Russian messages, some of which we even hear being uttered on the House floor." A few days earlier, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Michael McCaul, in an interview with Puck News anchor Julia Ioffe, had said that "I think Russian propaganda has made its way into the United States, unfortunately, and it's infected a good chunk of my party's base." In an earlier interview, McCaul suggested conservative news outlets were to blame. McCaul and Turner [join](#) former Vice President Mike Pence, Senator Thom Tillis and an aide to Senator Todd Young, presidential candidate Nikki Haley and Senator John Cornyn, as well as former Rep. Liz Cheney and Rep. Dan Crenshaw, in calling out pro-Putin sentiments taking hold in parts of the Republican Party.

Yesterday, former Rep. Ken Buck (who was a member of the House Freedom Caucus before abruptly retiring from Congress in March), responding to Marjorie Taylor Greene's anti-Ukraine comments, for a second time labelled her "Moscow Marjorie" during a CNN interview. "She is just mouthing the Russian propaganda, and really hurting American foreign policy in the process." On Wednesday, during a House Oversight Committee [hearing](#), Greene, while questioning historian Timothy Synder, highlighted news stories and photos she characterized as depicting neo-Nazis in Ukraine. Earlier this month, Greene had [said](#) on a Bannon War Room podcast that "This is a war on Christianity. The Ukrainian government is attacking Christians. The Ukrainian government is executing priests. Russia is not doing that. They are not attacking Christianity. As a matter of fact, they seem to be protecting it."

### **Concluding Thoughts**

On Thursday, the Wall Street Editorial Board [stood](#) behind Mike Johnson following his C-SPAN remarks, writing that he "deserves credit for his show of conviction, which represents the best of the GOP in the tradition of Ronald Reagan." It concluded by saying that "Mr. Johnson's behavior is called leadership, and the GOP would be more popular and better able to govern if more of its members showed such mettle themselves – or had more respect for those who demonstrate it."

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<sup>7</sup> On Thursday night, Trump [warned](#) that Europe needs to do more to support Ukraine, prompting European Council President Charles Michel to [tell](#) Trump to get his "facts straight."

After Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban dropped his objection, in early February, the European Union authorized a fund of €50 billion (\$54 billion) to support Ukraine. The European Commission was directed to prepare an annual report on how the fund is to be deployed, approval of which will be by simple majority vote in the European Parliament. [According](#) to POLITICO, citing data from the Kiel Institute, EU member states and the European Union have committed €144 billion in military and financial aid to Ukraine, but have only allocated €77 billion. The United States has committed around €68 billion in aid and has allocated for delivery about €66 billion. However, the United States leads Europe slightly when it comes specifically to military aid.



Those Republicans criticizing the Putin wing of their party for supporting Putin and parroting Kremlin talking points have varying explanations for these antics, including a greater comfort being in opposition than in the majority with the attendant responsibility to govern, the ease with which they are able to parlay their performance politics into more appearances on news outlets and greater fundraising, and the overarching pervasive influence on House Republican members in safe seats of Trump, who remains fixated on Putin.

Ukraine should be able to receive the aid envisioned by yesterday’s House approval on an expedited basis, due to the siting, as explained by the [Associated Press](#), of ammunition and air defense components in storage facilities in the United States and Europe. While the aid will provide much needed assistance on the battlefield and a much-needed boost to morale across Ukraine, the war is far from over. Putin remains unbowed, and more Republican House members voted against aid than for it. And, as Jonathan Weisman and Michael Gold [writing](#) this evening in the Washington Post noted, “few issues have been more central to the former president’s creed than his foreign policy isolationism, his call for Europe to raise military spending in its own backyard, and his foreign policy shift toward Vladimir V. Putin’s Russia.” They were spot on in asking: do the 101 Republicans who broke from Trump represent a return to bipartisanship or were the 112 House Republicans who voted against the aid (21 of whom also voted against aid to Israel) the story?

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