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Statement on Legislation To Fund Ukraine Assistance and COVID–19 Prevention and Treatment Efforts

May 9, 2022

Ten days ago, I sent to Congress an urgent proposal to provide needed military, economic, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. The plan was substantial in size, because the need is substantial: We must stand by Ukraine as it defends itself from Russian aggression.

The need is also urgent. I have nearly exhausted the resources given to me by a bipartisan majority in Congress to support Ukraine's fighters. This aid has been critical to Ukraine's success on the battlefield. We cannot allow our shipments of assistance to stop while we await further Congressional action. We are approximately 10 days from hitting this critical deadline.

I am pleased that, in my conversations with Congressional leaders, there appears to be strong support for the proposal I submitted, and Congress is likely to pass it in substantially the form I proposed. I urge them to do so, and again, I urge them to do so quickly.

Previously, I had recommended that Congress take overdue action on much needed funding for COVID treatments, vaccines, and tests, as part of the Ukraine supplemental bill. However, I have been informed by Congressional leaders in both parties that such an addition would slow down action on the urgently needed Ukrainian aid, a view expressed strongly by several congressional Republicans. We cannot afford delay in this vital war effort. Hence, I am prepared to accept that these two measures move separately so that the Ukrainian aid bill can get to my desk right away.

However, let me be clear. As vital as it is to help Ukraine combat Russian aggression, it is equally vital to help Americans combat COVID. Without timely COVID funding, more Americans will die needlessly. We will lose our place in line for America to order new COVID treatments and vaccines for the fall, including next-generation vaccines under development, and be unable to maintain our supply of COVID tests. In the fall, if we are hit by new variants, it will be too late to get the tools needed for protection, critical treatments that will be available in Europe, but not the United States. In addition, our effort to help lower income countries get COVID vaccines into arms will stall.

So I call on Congress to pass the Ukrainian supplemental funding bill immediately and get it to my desk in the next few days. And then, I urge Congress to move promptly on the COVID funding bill. This virus knows no borders; we must continue to save lives here at home and around the world.

Categories: Statements by the President : Ukraine assistance and COVID–19 prevention and treatment efforts, legislation funding.

Subjects: Congress : Bipartisanship; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Russia : Ukraine, airstrikes and invasion; Ukraine : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Ukraine : Russian airstrikes and invasion; Ukraine : U.S. assistance.

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