

done this throughout Crimea. The Government of Russia looks foolish. The world community understands that. They are levying foolish retaliatory sanctions, mocking the efforts of the international community to bring about a peaceful and fair resolution to the illegal invasion and the annexation of Crimea.

Yesterday President Obama and other European leaders meeting in The Hague formed a strong, united front in denouncing Russia's unlawful actions against the people of Ukraine. Under President Obama's leadership, the United States, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom took further action by suspending Russia from the G8—as of today it is the G7—and canceling the planned summit in Sochi this summer.

I mentioned those seven countries, but over in Europe yesterday, the President was there with some 42 other nations, all of them looking with an eye toward what Russia had done that was totally contrary to international law. By excluding Russia from the G8, President Obama and our allies have sent the message loudly and clearly that bullying behavior and rhetoric will not go unchallenged. I applaud the efforts of our allies to take a stand against Russia's aggression and welcome their further commitment to hold accountable President Putin and his cronies—and they really are his cronies. If there were ever a thugocracy, this is it. This is a government that is corrupt, and they need to be held accountable for violating international law. This cannot go unnoticed and unretaliated against.

As for action here in the Senate, I look forward to stabilizing Ukraine and imposing new sanctions against Russia by passing the bill that is before us. We should do that today. One way or the other, we need to get it done as quickly as possible.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

UKRAINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start with a few words about the legislation the Senate is considering this week on Ukraine. It touches on the jurisdiction of many committees and is of high interest to Senators on both sides of the aisle. How the

United States meets the Russian invasion of Crimea matters. It is related to the future vitality of NATO, the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, and our own energy policy regarding the export of natural gas.

We have Members on both sides of the aisle working closely, and there is a decent amount of common ground here, which is good. Nearly everyone agrees the Ukrainian people deserve our support. Most of us also agree we should back up that support with meaningful legislation, not just to show our support for an independent, democratic, and free Ukraine but also to show President Putin there will be costs for his actions.

So one would think it wouldn't be that difficult to get a solution here, but roadblocks keep popping up. First, there was a House-passed bill prior to the recess that would have provided loan guarantees to Ukraine. It was blocked by the majority leader. We should have passed that and sent it to the President. Now the majority leader seems determined to blow up the process too. Yesterday he actually came to the floor to effectively blame the Republicans—believe it or not—for the invasion of Crimea. I mean, who writes this stuff? It is not just completely unhelpful, it also injects hyperpartisanship into the process at a time when we should all actually be working together. At this point it is not at all certain the majority leader might not even make things worse by shutting down the amendment process. I hope that is not where we end up. This issue is way too important for that.

Look, this bill in the Senate cannot pass the House or become law in its current form. It has to be amended. Not only have many Members not yet had a chance to offer amendments in committee, but so many developments have unfolded in this crisis in the weeks since the bill was drafted, the legislation has to be at the least modified to take those realities into account. In order for this bill to become law, the controversial IMF provision must be removed.

This simply cannot be a “take it or leave it” situation. That is just nonsensical. The people who sent us here to represent them deserve better. We should give them that. That means allowing a sensible amendment process, and it means dropping the kinds of wild partisan accusations we have seen—attacks that will only make it that much harder to get an effective bipartisan solution.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

The Senator from Illinois.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened carefully to the comments of the minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and he is asking for bipartisanship and quick action on the Ukrainian matter before the Senate today. I agree with him completely.

In fact, it was about 10 days ago when Senator JOHN MCCAIN, on the other side of the aisle, joined with me and six of our colleagues, and we took a late-night flight on a Thursday evening, flew all night long to go to Kiev, Ukraine. We spent the whole day on Friday meeting with government leaders. We had one night in a hotel room and then the next day, Saturday, a whole day of meeting with their leaders as well. Late that night we caught a plane back to Washington, arriving at 5 in the morning.

It was a whirlwind trip but an important one because it came just hours before the Russians staged this phony referendum in Crimea—a referendum that had been condemned by the United Nations Security Council, with the exception of Russia's vote. They voted against the condemnation, which was to be expected. China abstained.

So the question before us is, What can and should the Senate do, and when should it do it? Well, we have a measure before us that passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I believe the vote was 14 to 3. I may be mistaken by a vote or two there, but it was a strong bipartisan majority. Senator MENENDEZ then brought it to the floor.

When it came to the floor before our trip to Ukraine, Senator REID offered to bring it to the floor and pass it and do this on a bipartisan basis quickly—just what the Senate minority leader is now asking for—but there was an objection. The objection came from the Senate minority leader's side of the aisle. A Republican Senator objected to moving this bipartisan measure forward quickly. So Senator REID set up the vote that happened yesterday when 78 Members voted in the affirmative to move to this measure. That is a good thing. I hope we can bring it up this week, and if the other side or any Senator has a proposal for an amendment, I hope they won't keep it to themselves and conceal it but bring it forward. Let's talk about it and see if we can amend this measure, change this measure in a constructive fashion, without introducing a lot of amendments which might bog us down in long-term debate.

The Ukrainians are waiting to hear from the United States. What they

want to hear from us is very simple. Are we on their side? Will we stand with them as they resist Russian aggression and the possibility of Russia moving from Crimea into Ukraine proper. This is a legitimate concern in Ukraine.

We met with the governor of Donetsk in the eastern reaches of Ukraine, where there are more Russian-speaking people and perhaps more Russian loyalty than perhaps in other parts of the country, and he is concerned about provocateurs coming in from Russia stirring up the local people in demonstrations. Several people have been killed in the process. They want to see things stabilized and quieted. In order to do that, I think the United States and freedom-loving nations around the world need to stand with Ukraine. This is the purpose of our resolution: to sanction Russia for its aggression in Crimea, to warn them off from any further aggression into Eastern and Southern Ukraine, to provide some basic assistance to Ukraine, and to set up a process where this new government in Ukraine can borrow—underline “borrow”—money under conditions from the International Monetary Fund to rebuild their economy. It is an economy on the ropes.

The previous leader Yanukovich was loyal to Moscow. People came to the streets and said they felt the government was insensitive to their own feeling that there also should be an attachment to the West and that Ukraine could in fact at least look to the West in terms of its economic future. Yanukovich resisted—demonstrations on the street, hundreds of thousands of people in the Maidan and Kiev, Ukraine, and 103 of those demonstrators gunned down, shot and killed in the streets, by snipers firing from government buildings.

There is a high state of emotion in the Ukraine today, as Yanukovich fled the country and the parliament took control. The new prime minister is a man who, at the age of 39, has an awesome responsibility. He carries the burden of his nation on his shoulders. He came to the United States asking for our help. President Obama met with him. He met with Members of the Senate, and I thought that conversation was positive—moving us forward. Now it is up to the Senate this week to move on this measure. Let's not bog down in partisan debates. Let's not get off on tangents.

One of the issues I think will be brought up in the course of this week is the question of energy, and it is an important question because Putin has to be viewed for what he is today. He is the leader of Russia, and he is trying to save and sustain a failing Soviet franchise. He said: The most disappointing event of the 20th century was the elimination of the Soviet Union. Those were Putin's words. He has this dream of restoring an empire, reaching out to countries which used to be republics of the Soviet Union and members of the

Warsaw Pact nations, and trying to bring them back into the Russian fold. We saw it 8 years ago when he invaded Georgia and took territory there.

I have been there. I have seen it. Behind the barbed wire in South Ossetia we see the Russian troops. They are garrisoned trying to protect that region of Georgia which they seized 8 years ago. The same thing is true now in Crimea. This is Putin's idea. If he can't win the hearts and minds of neighboring nations, he will take them over with masked gunmen, Russian soldiers, and energy extortion.

There was a debate in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about whether or not we can come to the assistance of those surrounding nations being preyed upon by the Russians and Putin—and to do it with assistance through energy. In the last several years we have found an abundance of natural gas in the United States. Somewhat surprisingly, our country, 5 years ago dependent on foreign energy sources, now has a surplus of natural gas.

So the question was raised: Can we transport this gas to these countries, liberating them from dependence on Russia for energy sources? It is a very important question. It is a timely question. But it is one we should view in the context of where we are today.

The good news is companies are moving back to the United States to reestablish manufacturing in our country—good-paying jobs. Why? We have skilled workers, some of the most productive in the world. Secondly, we now have this surplus of natural gas—an important feedstock for manufacturing jobs. With those two elements and transportation costs, we find more companies coming back to the United States, and we need them—in Illinois, in New Jersey, and desperately around the United States.

So the question then is raised—an important question: Would we jeopardize our economic growth, our creation of manufacturing jobs, if we started exporting the natural gas which we have discovered? It is a worthy debate, an important debate. It is one that is really important when we consider the future of building manufacturing jobs in America.

Secondly, we take a look at this natural gas debate, and we have to put it in historic context. Those who say to export, just to sell it, and that it is another commodity, need to put this in historical context. If 5 years ago the United States had gone through a famine, would we be exporting agricultural goods today without concern? I don't think so. We would think twice about it because we can remember that not that long ago we were vulnerable. Thank goodness we weren't and haven't been. But think about the energy famine we suffered some 5 years ago. We were dependent on OPEC. We were dependent on foreign suppliers. We were worried about where our Nation was going from an energy perspective.

The discovery of new sources of natural gas, new methods of extraction and new sources of oil, for example, have given us hope that we are going to be an energy surplus Nation. But it is a newfound treasure, and it is one about which we ought to be careful and measure carefully.

Some say we have plenty, more than we can use, and it should be an international commodity. Others say take care and make certain we make the decisions best for America, number one.

Should we debate that and decide that in a matter of minutes or hours on the floor of the Senate this week or take the time to look at it carefully? I think the latter.

When I went and spoke with the new Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yatsenyuk, I mentioned this possibility: What if we exported liquefied natural gas to Ukraine? He said: We don't have a place to receive it today. It is a pretty substantial investment of infrastructure to receive LNG into our country and to use it effectively. We are not in the position with our economy to make that investment today. We are going to look to other energy sources in the near term.

So the notion that natural gas exports will have benefit for Ukraine or any nation in the near term may be wishful thinking. Shouldn't we look at that part of the equation honestly about what they can absorb, when they can absorb it, and whether they want it? I think these are all legitimate and critically important energy policy debates in which we should engage.

But let's not make any mistake about it. We need to pass a resolution condemning what Russia has done in Crimea and threatens to do in Ukraine. They have gathered at the borders of Belarus and in Russia, on the eastern reaches of Ukraine—military forces far beyond what was necessary to guarantee an orderly referendum in Crimea a little over 9 days ago. They are poised to move forward. I pray that they won't.

We have to make it clear in the West—whether it is President Obama's visit with the G-7 nations, whether it is the European Union in resolution or even our Senate and House—that we stand with Ukraine. We want to stand by their sovereign and territorial integrity.

Many people didn't notice—they should have—but in 1994, Ukraine was the third strongest nuclear power in the world. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had more nuclear weapons than any country on earth, save the United States and Russia.

In 1994, they came forward and said: We are prepared to eliminate and destroy our nuclear arsenal if we have the assurance of major nations this won't jeopardize our future and it won't jeopardize our territorial integrity. They produced what was known as the Budapest Memorandum. The Budapest Memorandum was signed by the United States, the United Kingdom,

Ukraine, and Russia, guaranteeing that at least in principle all those nations would respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Within the last 2 weeks, Russia has not only reneged on that promise—it has in fact invaded Ukraine and taken over territory there.

It is important for us, when it comes to Ukraine, to not only stand by the Ukrainian people as they move toward a more democratic form of government, but it is important for us to reinforce the premise that if a country will give up its nuclear weapons, will not pursue the development of nuclear weapons, and become part of the nuclear club, we will basically say: That will not create a dangerous situation for your future. This is what the Budapest agreement was about, recently violated by Russia, one of the signatories.

If we want to make the argument in Iran, North Korea, and other countries, that they should forswear their nuclear weapons, shouldn't we also be standing by the premise that if they do, at least civilized nations will stand behind them if they and their sovereignty are threatened? This is what is happening today in Ukraine and Crimea.

It is not just a question of the survival of the Ukrainian Government but also a question as to whether civilized countries around the world trying to lessen the threat of nuclear weapons will stand with one voice and condemn the Russians for what they have done.

It is very clear Putin has ambitions far beyond the Republic of Georgia and far beyond Ukraine. He engaged in this charm offensive at the Sochi Olympics and talked about the modern Russia and what it meant in the 21st century. The very same troops who were protecting the athletes from terrorism in Sochi, as soon as the final ceremony ended, were shifted and transferred into Crimea to invade that nation. The charm offensive was clearly over. NBC may have covered the Sochi Olympics, but it didn't cover the invasion of Crimea in real-time. But it happened, and we know it happened.

Having been to Ukraine with Senator McCAIN and six other colleagues, our bipartisan delegation found a deep attachment in Ukraine to the United States. It is an attachment sometimes linked to specific families. I happen to represent the City of Chicago, where there is a prominent section known as Ukrainian Village. When I returned from Ukraine and went back to this section of Chicago, near the church where the Ukrainians worship on Sunday, we had over 500 people who gathered to hear what I had seen and heard and to talk about where we should go when it came to the future of Ukraine.

But it is worthy to note that there weren't just Ukrainian Americans in that room in Chicago when I returned a week ago. In the front row were Polish people—and we have more Poles in Chicago than almost any other city

outside of the nation of Poland—Lithuanians, Latvians, Georgians, and even Venezuelans. They had all come there to listen carefully, many of them with memories that not that long ago they were under Soviet domination and lived in fear of what would come from Moscow. These same people were standing together. They were standing in league with their Ukrainian-American neighbors, with the understanding that throughout its modern history Russia and the Soviet Union have taken over countries nearby when they could, and many times we didn't speak out.

I have heard the argument made that perhaps, if the United States showed more military force in other places in the world, we might have discouraged Vladimir Putin. That argument doesn't make sense. Look at history. We were in the midst of the Vietnam war and we had committed half a million troops. The greatest military in the world was engaged in Southeast Asia when Brezhnev, the head of the Soviet Union, invaded Czechoslovakia. We were engaged in two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, actively showing the power of our military in those countries, under President George W. Bush, when Vladimir Putin invaded the Republic of Georgia.

So I think it is an empty argument to say if we just show our muscles and start a war someplace, the rest of the world will be fearful. I don't think it is a recipe for the future. What the President is trying to do is to establish political and economic sanctions on Russia which will cost their economy and put pressure on them to stop this aggressive conduct. That, to me, is sensible.

Let's take up this measure. If Members have amendments, bring them to the floor. Let's pass it today, not later this week. Let's show that we stand with the Ukrainians and oppose Russian aggression, support sanctions when needed, and prepare to loan to the Ukrainians the money they need to sustain their economy and to build it in the future.

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe. It is moving toward the West. Let us welcome them. As long as they are going to make certain their future is consistent with our democratic values, I think it is important we not only continue this dialogue but show we can truly be their allies and friends.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor to discuss the fourth anniversary of ObamaCare. Four years ago this

past Sunday the President signed his health care legislation into law. The measure was jammed through Congress on a party-line vote against the strong objections of Republicans and the American people. Democrats and the President assured everyone this opposition was temporary. When people find out what is in the law, they will like it, Democrats and the President promised.

Four years later, however, that isn't the case. The majority of the American people still disapprove of the law. Why do they still disapprove? Because the President's health care law has failed in every possible way. We have canceled health care plans. We have seen people who have lost their doctors and lost their hospitals. We have seen soaring premiums, higher out-of-pocket costs, lower pay, disastrous Web sites that have left thousands in limbo, confusion in the health insurance market, and widespread damage to the economy.

The President's law has failed so badly that some of the President's strongest supporters are rejecting it. Young people whose support of the President was so successful in his election and reelection are turning their backs on the President's law. Unions which pushed for the law's passage and the President's reelection are now protesting that the law will destroy their health care plans and damage workers' livelihoods. Democrats running for reelection are running from the health care law as fast as they can for fear that association with ObamaCare will doom their chances of reelection. People are finding out what the law truly means for them and they don't like it.

When the President was trying to pass his health care law, he made a few promises. I think a lot of people remember when the President said: If you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan. He said: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. The reality of the law has proven to be quite different.

Six million Americans so far have lost their health care plans as a direct result of ObamaCare, and far too many of them found their only alternative was a plan that offered less coverage for more money. Millions of other Americans have lost their doctors and hospitals. ObamaCare placed a number of new taxes and regulations on insurance companies that left them facing huge cost increases. In an effort to manage their costs without raising health care premiums even further, many companies have narrowed their network of doctors and hospitals, especially in exchange plans. As a result, many Americans have lost doctors they have been seeing literally for years. Cancer patients in the middle of treatment have found their doctors are not covered by the new health care plans. Patients are also discovering their hospital options are now far more limited, as many plans exclude top hospitals.