

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Illinois.

#### UKRAINE AND LITHUANIA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, Senator PORTMAN of Ohio and I hosted a group of visiting members of Parliament from Ukraine. We were joined by colleagues from both sides of the aisle in a continued demonstration of bipartisan support for that beleaguered country.

One of the Ukrainian Parliamentarians included a key negotiator with the Russians, David Arakhamia. He was clear in his assessment: The Russians won't negotiate seriously unless confronted with strength. I agree. We must not let Russia regroup and retrench in the eastern part of Ukraine.

We are now in the fourth month of this horrific war, launched without provocation by Russian war criminal Vladimir Putin to fortify his fragile ego and his warped nostalgia for Soviet horror stories. We all recall the initial assessments that Ukraine and its democratically elected government would fall within days of the Russian military assault. The Russians, for months, poised on the border of Ukraine a mighty force—armored military, virtually everything imaginable. Well, guess what. It not only didn't happen, but the Russian military was turned back decisively in their effort to take Kyiv.

In the war-torn months since, the government of Ukraine has become a symbol of freedom, of strength, determination, and defiance around the world. In fact, key leaders from Europe visited Kyiv last week and pledged their support for Ukraine's membership in the European Union.

President Biden has played a key role in rallying NATO allies and providing equipment and support that have allowed the Ukrainians to heroically defend their nation. He has committed more than \$6.3 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the Biden administration, with \$5.6 billion provided since the beginning of the war alone.

This kind of security aid typically takes months to process and deliver, but weapons are being delivered to Ukraine at unprecedented speed, some in as little as 48 hours. Technical assistance, training, and humanitarian aid continue in parallel.

In fact, under President Biden's leadership, the NATO alliance has never been more unified or formidable, including with two new aspiring members, Finland and Sweden, hoping to join soon—a step I strongly support. Imagine, Vladimir Putin started this vicious war against Ukraine to weaken NATO. He strengthened that organization, and now two pivotal nations in Europe have asked to join NATO for the first time—an indication to Putin that NATO's days are ahead, not behind, it.

Despite these historic successes, we must continue to adjust our support for

what is likely to be a protracted fight. The Ukrainian military needs long-range artillery and other key military equipment to withstand and repel the Russian onslaught.

I am joining Senators PORTMAN, BLUMENTHAL, and GRASSLEY in a letter to Secretary of Defense Austin this week urging more long-range rocket artillery for Ukraine, which the administration is reportedly reviewing at this very moment.

The urgent needs go beyond weapons. Ukraine's economy and food exports—exports that feed some of the world's poorest nations—cannot be held hostage to Vladimir Putin's cruelty. For the record, more than 20 million tons of Ukrainian grain exports are stopped because of a Russian blockade of Ukrainian ports, and it is estimated that barely half of Ukraine's harvest can be exported this year.

Secretary of State Blinken rightly has accused Russia of using food as a weapon of war, and there are credible reports that Russia has stolen Ukrainian grain—imagine this—only to simply resell it on the world market.

One has to ask, when you consider this barbaric act, following other barbaric acts: Does Vladimir Putin really believe he is going to restore the moral authority of Russia by his actions? Is this really the kind of behavior, incidentally, that China wants to be associated with?

So our task and that of our allies must include not only a sustained and updated supply of critical weaponry but also help to reopen and secure Ukrainian ports and find alternative land routes for this year's harvest.

We must support efforts announced by Attorney General Garland today in his visit to Ukraine to help identify, apprehend, and prosecute those involved in war crimes. Here in the Senate, we can help that effort by passing the bipartisan Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act. I have introduced this bill with Senator GRASSLEY to ensure that perpetrators of war crimes in Ukraine and elsewhere cannot find sanctuary in the United States of America.

I also urge my colleagues not to delay approval of Finland and Sweden into NATO and to never again entertain the weakening of this critical Western alliance.

Let me also take a moment to comment on threats made over the weekend to one of our NATO allies, a nation which still has a recent stark memory of Soviet horror. I refer to Lithuania. Lithuania is one of the Baltic States that led the effort for independence from the Soviet Union.

Who can forget the Baltic Way, a human chain of 2 million people who joined hands across Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania 33 years ago to call for independence from the Soviet Union? Just a few years later, in July 1991, the Russian Government recognized the Baltic nations' independence during the historic end of Soviet tyranny in

Eastern Europe, recognizing that the Russian people were ready to give Baltic States a future.

Since then, Lithuania has flourished as a vocal and vibrant member of the European Union and NATO. This small nation of nearly 3 million people has never forgotten its own struggle for freedom. Lithuania was an early ally of Ukraine's in its fight with Russia, going back to 2014. It has stood firm against its neighboring dictator in Belarus, the Putin puppet Alyaksandr Lukashenka, and against Chinese economic bullying for increasing its trade relationship with Taiwan.

Over the weekend, Russia actually threatened Lithuania, which was preventing goods sanctioned by the EU from being transported through its territory to the Russian territory of Kaliningrad. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Landsbergis, who is accustomed to Russian threats, said:

It's not Lithuania doing anything. It's European sanctions that started working from 17 June.

Feigned Russian outrage over Lithuania's actions limiting the movement of these goods already sanctioned while Russia is bombing entire peaceful civilian areas to rubble in Ukraine shows the depth of Putin's madness.

President Biden and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg have been very clear that the organization's commitment to the common defense is ironclad; it will protect every inch of member territory. Vladimir Putin should think carefully about the NATO commitment and the horrific cost he has already imposed on the Russian and Ukrainian people before making any further threats and continuing his war crimes in Ukraine.

Mr. President, it has been my good fortune to have visited Lithuania many times. My mother was born there. I have a special affection for that land and its people. I was there in the darkest of Soviet times in 1978. I am glad I went. As sad and depressing as it was, it was important for me to see that moment in history.

To see Lithuania today is to see a brandnew democracy, thriving in its belief and values of individual people and the determination to continue with a free economy and an open democracy. They have come and rallied to the side of many around them who are being terrorized by Lukashenka in Belarus and by Putin in Ukraine. And Lithuania speaks up. This small nation of fewer than 3 million people is a nation which is determined to stand for principle and values.

I want to make certain they understand that there are those of us here in the U.S. Congress who will never forget the battle they waged to become independent of the Soviet Union and their determination to stay in that position.

I was proud to be one of the voices in the chorus calling for the Baltic States to be part of the NATO alliance. They saw it as their day of liberation from fear, from the Soviet Union—then Russia, now Putin. We have to make sure

we keep those words sacred so that the NATO alliance is an alliance that can be counted on by all of the members.

I am heartened by the fact that Finland and Sweden are joining in this effort now, want to be part of the future of NATO. Extending that NATO border with Russia 600 to 800 miles is an affirmation of the foolishness of Putin. He actually thought, at the end of the day, by invading Ukraine, NATO would be weaker. Now it will be stronger than ever and, frankly, right up against his own country and the Finnish borders if they are allowed to join us in the NATO alliance, which I dearly hope for.

In the meantime, to my friends and all of the folks I have worked with in Lithuania, we are so proud of your continued determination to stand up for what is right. Continue doing that. That is the spirit of the Baltics, it is the spirit of Lithuania, and it is the spirit of the NATO alliance.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here today to visit with my colleagues about a group that we refer to as pharmacy benefit managers, but around Washington, the shorthand for that term is PBMs.

Many Americans may not know about PBMs. They are very obscure in the whole pharmaceutical business. Yet the PBM market is nearly \$500 billion, and they are powerful in our pharmaceutical drug supply chain.

It is our duty in Congress to understand, first, how PBMs operate; second, hold them accountable; and, third, work to lower prescription drug costs for the taxpayers and for the consumers.

In 2018, I pressed the Federal Trade Commission to investigate PBMs. I saw the ongoing consolidation in the pharmaceutical supply chain and its impact on drug prices, driving those prices up. But I didn't wait for the FTC to act.

I have pursued, one, bipartisan legislation; two, held hearings; and, three, conducted oversight. Most recently, Senator CANTWELL and I have introduced the PBM Transparency Act. This bill prohibits PBMs from engaging in spread pricing. This is a situation where PBMs charge an insurer more than they charge the pharmacy and then they pocket the difference. Iowans call that gaming the system.

Another practice we prohibit in our bill: clawbacks. In Medicare Part D, these are sometimes called retroactive direct and indirect remuneration fees—or DIR, for short.

Iowa pharmacists have told me clawbacks are costing patients more in higher copays and also costing the local pharmacy. This practice is putting rural and independent pharmacists out of business. In addition, our bill will incentivize fair and transparent PBM practices, benefiting consumers and taxpayers.

The bill has the support of community pharmacists, manufacturers, and patient advocacy organizations. Not surprisingly, this industry we call PBMs oppose the Cantwell-Grassley bill. They say my bill is “anti-competitive” and, in their words, an “expansion of power at the FTC.” They also claim that their industry is already well-regulated. Nothing could be further from the truth.

My bill establishes transparency and accountability. So good news: Tomorrow, the Commerce Committee will mark up the PBM Transparency Act. I don't happen to sit on this very important Commerce Committee, but I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Finally, I have never given up on passing the bipartisan Wyden-Grassley bill, known as the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act. Despite the Democrats having the majority for 18 months, we have not passed a prescription drug bill. So we still have high prescription drug prices.

By now, I would assume they would be interested in advancing a bipartisan prescription drug bill. They can get 60-plus votes, save the taxpayers \$95 billion and seniors, who are consumers, \$72 billion—rather than a partisan effort that doesn't have 60 votes here in the U.S. Senate.

I want my colleagues to know I will work with anyone who wants to pass the bipartisan Wyden-Grassley bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, 28 days ago, an 18-year-old young man opened fire on students at the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX. He murdered 21 people—19 children and 2 teachers. In the process, he effectively committed suicide as well.

This was an attack that was so cruel, so brutal, and inhumane that it has brought much of our Nation to its knees in mourning. Since the shooting, my office has received—as I am sure many other Members of Congress have—I have received tens of thousands of calls and letters and emails with a singular message: Do something.

Do something. Not do nothing, but do something. Texans are disgusted and outraged by what happened at Robb Elementary, and they want Congress to take appropriate action to prevent the loss of more innocent lives.

I don't want us to pass a bill for the purpose of checking a box. I want to make sure we actually do something useful, something that is capable of becoming a law, something that will have the potential to save lives.

I am happy to report as a result of the hard work of a number of Senators in this Chamber that we have made some serious progress. In particular, over the last few weeks, Mr. MURPHY, the Senator from Connecticut; Ms. SINEMA, the Senator from Arizona; Mr. TILLIS, the Senator from North Carolina; and I have searched high and low for common ground.

Now, there are some people who would say, What is the use? Why try? We know this is an issue that divides much of the country, depending on where you live, and maybe even divides people living in the same household. But I think we have found some areas where there is space for compromise. And we have also found that there are some redlines and no middle ground. We have talked; we have debated; we have disagreed; and, finally, we have reached an agreement among the four of us. But, obviously, this is not something that will become law or fail to become law because of a small group of Senators.

The truth is we had a larger group of 20 Senators—10 Republicans and 10 Democrats—come forward and sign on to an agreed set of principles, and I believe as Senators see the text that supports those principles, they will see we have tried our best to be true as to what we said those agreed principles should be.

So soon, very soon—not soon enough for me—but very soon, we will see the text of bipartisan legislation that will help keep our children and our communities safer.

We know there is no such thing as a perfect piece of legislation. We are imperfect human beings. But we have to try, and I believe this bill is a step in the right direction.

One of the pillars of this legislation is support for community-based mental health care. Following the violent attacks, we have all heard about missed signs, and the fact is the New York Times recently profiled the type of young man: typically alienated, isolated, not receiving any sort of support or medical or psychiatric care, certainly not complying with their doctors' orders when it comes to taking their medication that allows them to manage their mental illness challenges.

We know that this profile is one that Salvador Ramos fit, the shooter in Uvalde. He was a deeply troubled young man. He was isolated. He was bullied in school. He cut himself because he said he liked the way it made him look. It made him look tough. He had a history of fighting, of assaulting fellow students, of threatening sexual assault of young women, and torturing and killing animals. It is a familiar profile.

This man, this young man, I think was crying out for help. But he got no help, notwithstanding the best efforts of people around him. He shot his own grandmother before he went to Robb Elementary School because she wanted