

basis for the 6 years he served as Lieutenant Governor. No one understands Ohio better than JON. His work on economic development as Lieutenant Governor will have lasting impact for generations. He has had a great career of public service. However, I am convinced that his service as U.S. Senator will be his most important and most impactful for Ohio and for our country. His knowledge of Ohio, and his ability to work with others, will make him a great U.S. Senator.

Signed, Ohio Governor and former U.S. Senator Mike DeWine.

Second one:

Senator HUSTED embodies everything Ohioans are about: family, hard work, love of country, and service. Ohio is better because of his years of service.

Alex Triantafilou, chairman of the Ohio Republican Party.

Next one:

JON was the Speaker when I started in the Ohio House in 2007. I watched and learned from him and today I use that knowledge everyday in the Ohio legislature.

Eighteen years. Pretty impressive.

He's a great leader and a great U.S. Senator.

Current Ohio Speaker of the House Matt Huffman.

Next one:

From his beginnings in rural Williams County to his leadership in the legislative and executive branch of our state government, JON HUSTED made Ohio a better state at every stop. I have no doubt he will do the same for our entire country in the United States Senate.

Ohio Senate President Rob McColley.

Next one: Senator HUSTED is passionate about his faith, his family, his State, and his country. It has been a pleasure watching him grow throughout the years, and without question he will serve his Senate family with great pride and integrity.

That is from the current Lieutenant Governor and former Ohio State football head coach, Jim Tressell.

And the last one:

During his service at the state level, JON saw firsthand, in great detail, the many problems at the federal level—problems that he was powerless as a state officer to solve. He brings that detailed knowledge and his passion for the right thing to the United States Senate—and the country will be better for it.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost.

I will end with this, Mr. President. Look at what he has already accomplished. I can say a little bit falls here in this Chamber. About 8 years ago, I remember sitting with Senator HUSTED—then-Lieutenant Governor, Candidate HUSTED, Nominee HUSTED—in a little office building in downtown Cleveland. He said: I have an idea that is going to be called Innovate Ohio.

JON, what is that?

We are going to put together leaders of the Ohio innovation ecosystem and make Ohio the most attractive State where you can build and grow a company.

And we had our first meeting. Who was in that meeting? Now-Senator JON HUSTED, now-Senator me, BERNIE MORENO, soon-to-be Governor Vivek

Ramaswamy, and our third Ohio honorary senator, Vice President JD VANCE—all hand-selected by Senator HUSTED to participate 8 years ago in Innovation Task Force.

So on nights when we go through vote-aramas and we are here 24, 30 hours, it is you whom I have to blame, Senator HUSTED, for encouraging me to seek public service.

I came to DC not knowing what to expect, and having somebody whom I consider a friend, somebody whom I know we can talk about anything and hash things out has made this job, very, very rewarding. Thank you for your service to Ohio. I look forward to serving with you in the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when Iran's proxies launched a full-scale war on Israel, October 7, 2023, President Biden pledged an unwavering commitment to Israel's security. That was the right message in the moment.

But as I warned publicly at the time, Israel needed more than just rhetorical solidarity. Like Ukraine, Israel needed precious time, space to maneuver, and materiel support to defeat a shared enemy. And yet, as in Ukraine, America's commitment has indeed wavered. Our support has not been ironclad.

Instead, under the previous administration, American support was delayed, restricted, and paired with attempts to micromanage Israel's operations and even interfere with Israeli politics. And at every turn, the progressive left and isolationist right hyperventilated about the specter of so-called forever war.

Fortunately, Israel held its ground. Israelis certainly weren't enthused about a ground war in Gaza. Their leaders knew that war would be difficult. But they knew it was unavoidable so long as Hamas terrorists still refused to release its hostages. They also knew lasting security meant changing Iran's calculus, not just responding to attacks from proxies.

So Israel decided to turn Iran's terrorist assets into liabilities. Despite the pearl-clutching here in Washington, our allies simultaneously decapitated Hezbollah and crippled Hamas. Their bold operations created a new opportunity for Lebanon to claw back its sovereignty from a terrorist state within a state.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the brutal Assad regime in Syria brought down a Russian vassal and Iran's favorite corridor of weapons and terrorist finance.

These are the circumstances President Trump inherited. What to do with them has been the subject of quite some debate. Some of his advisers and supporters came with Obama-Biden-era talking points, ready to urge him to continue his predecessor's policy of constraining Israel. Some had argued publicly that America had no vital or existential interests in the Middle East

or claimed the region was a distraction from other priorities. They warned of forever war.

Some seemed to push for nuclear negotiations with parameters eerily similar to the nuclear deal the President withdrew from his first term. They even proposed Iran could keep enriching uranium, until the President, rightly, correctly, quashed that idea.

These mixed messages emboldened Iran and its proxies. After all, why give up if administration officials saw the Middle East as little more than a distraction or if they seem as fearful of restoring deterrence as the previous guys?

So Hamas kept holding hostages. The Houthis kept targeting Israel and Red Sea commerce. And the Islamic Republic kept marching toward a nuclear weapon. And in response, Israel took the next logical step to restore deterrence.

Once again, innovative and decisive strikes destroyed Iran's air defenses and imposed immediate—immediate—costs on Tehran. Leaders across Israel's politics stood united behind the daring operations.

Ah, but here in America, the same restrainers, anti-Israel progressives, and self-proclaimed realists warned again of regional conflagration if the President intervened alongside or even supported Israel's strikes.

The President's own—his own—Director of National Intelligence traveled to Hiroshima to record a bizarre video, not as a warning against Tehran's nuclear ambitions but presumably against American or Israeli operations to blunt them.

Now, fortunately, the President rejected the pleas of appeasers and isolationists. The strikes he ordered dealt a massive blow to Iran's nuclear program, bolstered American credibility, and strengthened U.S. and Israel leverage to end Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and its support for terrorism for good.

Thanks to Israel's historic efforts for more than a year and a half, Iran's ability to threaten regional stability is massively degraded. Not since before the Islamic Revolution has there been such an opportunity for America, Israel, and our Arab partners to reset regional dynamics on such favorable terms.

Achieving it has required no large-scale deployment of U.S. ground forces. It required only supporting our friends. Israel is a close ally and a strategic asset, not a liability. And the strategic return on our investment in assisting Israel is incalculable. Standing with our Israeli friends offers a powerful lesson about American leadership, the value of alliances and partnerships, and the real nature of peace through strength.

And this lesson extends far, far beyond the Middle East.

If America refuses to apply it elsewhere—like Ukraine—we do so at grave risk to our own interests. But that is

exactly what some in Washington seem to be doing.

Congress recently learned that a senior DOD official conducted a review of DOD security assistance efforts and—listen to this—concluded that the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, among other programs, was wasteful. This is a Republican administration panning a program created by the Republican Congress in 2015 to counter President Obama's toothless response to Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine.

I would like to see the analysis behind the administration's decision to zero out USAI in its fiscal 2026 request. I would like to hear them try to explain away the massive return on investment of America's security assistance to Ukraine and the previous lessons we have learned from our Ukrainian partners.

The Secretary of the Army has, rightly, called Ukraine—listen to this—“the Silicon Valley of warfare.” Do his colleagues at the Pentagon think this assessment is wrong or do they just not think access to cutting-edge, modern combat is valuable?

Well, here is the truth: USAI and other security efforts have helped us, measurably, address shortcomings in strategy, capabilities, and production capacity that would have gone ignored until it was too late.

It is an inconvenient reality for isolationists and restrainers, but for a tiny percent—a tiny percent—of our defense budget, we helped a smaller military resist invasion by a vastly larger one and degrade a major U.S. adversary.

As with Israel, Ukraine is fighting an adversary of the United States. Our support does not entangle us in a far-off foreign conflict. For Russia, Iran, China, North Korea, America is the main enemy, the Great Satan. If these adversaries beat our friends, the threat to America becomes a thousand times greater. We should be grateful for friends so willing to defend our collective interests against common folks.

Partnership with Ukraine is teaching us what modern warfare could mean for U.S. forces when they do face direct conflict. It has tested our assumptions about munitions inventories, expenditure rates, electronic warfare, and the duration of conflict.

Without Ukraine's experience with U.S. weapons, we would have been surprised to find some advanced systems quickly rendered inoperable on future battlefields. The money we invest in USAI on weapons for Ukraine expands our own production capacity in the process and will improve the quality of our own munitions.

Supplemental appropriations on Ukraine and Israel, in turn, backfill our own stocks with brand new capabilities—not just 155-mm rounds but air defenses and long-range fires, with specific investment in solid rocket motors.

These investments help us prepare for conflict in the Indo-Pacific, and

production would be slower in the absence of our partnership with Ukraine. Not doing more to address our growing defense needs isn't a failure of foresight. It is a failure of political will.

Everyone wants to see an end to Russia's war in Ukraine, but the price of peace matters. If we want enduring stability in Europe, we can't fall for an illusory peace. We should know enough history not to dismiss this as merely “a quarrel in a faraway country, between two people of whom we no nothing.”

It is a major war of conquest in Europe—the most significant since the days of Nazi Germany—and allies and adversaries half a world away are watching it closely for clues about America's resolve.

Certainly, Europe's deepening commitments to collective defense will make real peace more enforceable. The President's insistence has driven much of this progress. Putin's brutality has reinforced it.

Since 2022, our European NATO allies have made historic—historic—investments in defense, often buying from us. Many are preparing to make even larger commitments at this week's NATO summit. All of that is good news. But we can't expect allies to continue signing up for 3.5 and 5 percent commitments if America insists on falling further behind.

Likewise, we can't expect Putin to end his aggression if he thinks America's abandonment of Ukraine is just a matter of time. And we can't expect anyone to take America's threats and commitments seriously if we are content to let our own strength atrophy.

A base budget request that cuts defense spending in real terms doesn't show Moscow we are serious, let alone Beijing. Leading from behind would be bad enough, but this is just plain falling behind.

The strongest deterrence is denying an adversary's objectives through military means. Israel is restoring this deterrence in the Middle East. Ukraine is achieving it by holding its own against Russia, but it needs help.

Recently, I have asked administration officials simple questions, like: Who is the aggressor in the conflict?

The answer is pretty obvious. But a second, equally simple question seems to actually trip them up: Who do we want to win? Who do we want to win?

The President made the right call to stand with Israel. I hope he will also decide to stand with Ukraine, prevent Russian victory, and start reversing a dangerous downward trend in our defense budgets.

I hope he will recognize Russia's attempt to “tap him along” for what it is. Putin is getting mixed messages from us. He thinks he has time. He believes the West is weak and divided.

But the President, at very little cost, can shatter that illusion. It is time to impose sanctions, raise the price of Russia's aggression, redouble security assistance to Ukraine, and drive the

Kremlin to seek peace. It is time for deterrence through denial.

There is no surer path to a just and enduring peace, no better way to demonstrate that peace through strength actually means something, no clearer sign to allies and adversaries watching closely, from the Western Hemisphere to the Indo-Pacific, that America still has the will to lead.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Louisiana.

#### NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

**Mr. CASSIDY.** Mr. President, in every single State, there are Americans relying on the National Flood Insurance Program to protect their home. It is shaded in every State. There are people who are making claims on the National Flood Insurance Program. Congress has the responsibility to serve all Americans, regardless of age, income, or ZIP Code.

Since President Biden's implementation of Risk Rating 2.0, seniors and low- and middle-income homeowners have been left behind. Earlier this month, I led eight of my Republican colleagues in urging FEMA to end the Biden-era Risk Rating 2.0. I want to work with the President to fix the mess the Biden administration has created.

Now, I want to share with my colleagues the same case we made in that letter for why action is needed now.

Every year, on June 1, the phrase “hoping for the best, preparing for the worst” comes to mind. For the folks in Louisiana, it is a way of life.

The hurricane season begins. With a higher gulf temperature than usual, meteorologists predict 13 to 19 named storms, 6 to 10 hurricanes, and 3 to 5 major hurricanes hitting the United States before the year's end. That is somewhere in the United States, not just the gulf coast.

I will note that the meteorologists always predict a lot. It is easier to be wrong predicting a lot than to be wrong predicting very few. But, nonetheless, we should hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

In my State, if there is such a warning, folks know what to do. They stock up on some nonperishable food items, they get their prescriptions renewed, they take care of their windows, they check on their neighbors, and they will also be bracing themselves financially.

Folks in my State are still trying to get back on their feet after 4 years of financial distress under the Biden administration. Add the cost of recovery, if there is a severe weather event, and many families just cannot afford it.

That is why we have the National Flood Insurance Program, a safety net program for millions across the country, including those in my State, for the last 50 years. Because of the National Flood Insurance Program, a retired couple in Livingston Parish who just paid off their mortgage sleeps better knowing that they are covered the next time or if they ever flood.