

# [***This congresswoman was born and raised in Ukraine. She just voted against aid for her homeland***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BX5-PR71-DYMD-62C7-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

SHERIDAN, Ind. — U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz, the first and only Ukrainian-born member of Congress, emerged early on as a natural advocate for supporting her native country in its war with Russia. But when [*$61 billion in additional support for the war*](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-mike-johnson-ukraine-israel-b72aed9b195818735d24363f2bc34ea4) effort came up for a vote in the House recently, she voted against it.

Instead she has called for better oversight of U.S. funds and opposed giving “blank checks” to the Ukrainian cause. She says U.S. border security should be a bigger priority.

That puts her more in line with conservative House Republicans and more notably with voters in her deeply conservative central Indiana congressional district. She's locked in a tough reelection fight in the May 7 GOP primary, made all the more complicated by her public announcement more than a year ago that she wouldn't seek another term, a decision she later reversed.

The aid package, part of a larger bill that also included assistance for Israel, Taiwan and other global hot spots, was approved by the House on April 20, the Senate on Tuesday and signed into law by President Joe Biden on Wednesday.

Spartz said she is “kind of appalled” at the notion that her heritage should dictate support for the Ukrainian cause if she feels the money would be wasted.

“My responsibility is the protection of American people,” she said during a recent interview.

Spartz spoke at an event hosted by the Hamilton County GOP at a community center in Sheridan, Indiana, a town of a few thousand people. The event in a hall just off of the town's main street was attended by eight of the nine GOP primary candidates, who were able to make their case to voters and county Republican officials one at a time during a meet-and-greet that also included short speeches by the candidates.

Mike Murphy, a former Indiana state representative and political commentator, said in a phone interview that funding for Ukraine isn't much of a priority for Republican voters these days. Concern about the southern border is a greater catalyst for participation, which isn't lost on candidates in the conservative district. Most of Spartz's opponents for the 5th district seat have said protecting the U.S.-Mexico border should be a bigger priority than sending money to Ukraine.

“They’re all gunning to be as Trump-like as possible,” Murphy said.

Border security has been hammered in the campaign by state Rep. Chuck Goodrich, the most well-funded of Spartz's eight challengers. He has attacked Spartz on her original support to Ukraine, saying she puts “Ukraine first.”

Goodrich, who attended the Sheridan event, acknowledged that Indiana is far from Mexico but said illegal drugs such as fentanyl enter the U.S. through the southern border and pose a threat deep in the heartland.

“Every state is a border state,” he said in an interview.

[*Spartz beat a crowded 2020 primary*](https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-indianapolis-susan-brooks-elections-campaigns-c6a0ca27a2ac20d560abf057389d0760) field, winning nearly 40% of the vote and receiving former President Donald Trump's general election endorsement. She ran unopposed in the 2022 primary.

Spartz made things harder for herself when she announced in early 2023 that she would not run again, citing fatigue with Washington ***politics*** and her desire to spend more time with her family. She also threatened to [*resign*](https://spartz.house.gov/media/press-releases/spartz-will-consider-resigning-congress-if-no-debt-commission-passed-year) if the national debt was not addressed.

For an entire year, that left the runway clear for candidates to campaign in one of most conservative districts in the state, composed of a mix of rural and suburban counties north of Indianapolis. Trump took the district in 2020, and it was [*redistricted to further favor Republicans*](https://apnews.com/article/elections-indiana-indianapolis-redistricting-andre-carson-b861df2578f816bbf2c7d45d5ec7aec1) that same year.

Campaign finance reports show Spartz trailing Goodrich in campaign funds, in part because Goodrich has put up $2.6 million of his own money. Goodrich, who represents the wealthy Indianapolis suburb of Hamilton County in the state legislature, outspent Spartz by $1.9 million in the first three months of 2024 and has loaned his campaign a total of $4.6 million, according to reports.

Spartz entered the final weeks before the primary with $134,000 of cash on hand compared to Goodrich's $1.3 million.

Trump has not made an endorsement in the 5th district this year. He's been ambivalent about aid to Ukraine, saying the war would not have happened if he had been president and that any support should take the form of loans rather than grants.

Even with Spartz’s short campaign runway, she retains the advantage of incumbency. She has accused Goodrich of cozying up to China and labeled him “Republican in Name Only.”

With Trump’s Republican nomination for the presidency secured, turnout is expected to be low.

Spartz, 45, immigrated to the U.S. in 2000 after meeting her husband from Indiana on a train in Europe. She started as a bank teller, later taught as an adjunct faculty member at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business and owns [*farm property*](https://apnews.com/general-news-498905fbe108bbf8000aca68cf39fa43).

After a long-time state senator retired before the end of his term, Hamilton County GOP officials selected Spartz, who was involved with the county party, to fill his term in 2017. She served three sessions in the statehouse before her election to Congress.

In an [*emotional news conference in 2022*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9A5ndgrm5c), Spartz called Russia’s invasion of Ukraine a “ [*genocide*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHrM9mrt5u8).” She described bombings her grandmother and friends in Ukraine had witnessed.

Later that year, she began to criticize Ukraine's leaders, including President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In the Sheridan interview, Spartz said “brave people” are “dying for freedom” in Ukraine but accused the Ukrainian government of corruption.

During her speech to voters, Spartz made no mention of the war in Ukraine. Instead she framed the stakes of her reelection as a fight against party hypocrisy, saying some of her fellow Republicans act like socialists.

Drawing on her experience growing up in the Soviet Union, as she has often done throughout her political career, she warned of a socialist future in the United States.

“I’m going to fight the righteous fight," she declared.

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A previous version of this story incorrectly said former President Donald Trump endorsed Spartz in the 2020 Republican Primary. He endorsed her in the general election.

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