

# [***Ukraine Aid Bill: Sense Of Urgency Brought To Capitol Hill.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV2-XP01-DXVP-5005-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** As House Speaker Mike Johnson plans to move forward with voting on foreign aid bills, more than 500 people came to Washington to meet with lawmakers

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Americans from all over the country gathered in Washington, D.C., April 12-16 for the Ukraine Action Summit, to advocate for continued U.S. aid for Ukraine.

Katya Soldak

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**As House Speaker Mike Johnson promised to move forward with voting on foreign aid bills, more than 500 people came to Washington for the Ukraine Action Summit to meet with lawmakers on Capitol Hill and instill a sense of urgency for providing Ukraine much-needed help.**

Since the start of Russia s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February, 2022, the U.S. hasdirectedsome $75 billion in humanitarian, financial and military assistance to Ukraine. Despite all the support from U.S. along with European and other partners, Ukraine's army lacks what it needs to continue the war, let alone win. The latest package of U.S. aid has been held up by the Republican majority in the House of Representatives, which has refused to consider a $95 billion bipartisan bill passed by theSenatein February. That bill included $60 billion for Ukraine and $14 billion for Israel. Anew foreign aid planinvolves four separate bills that include funding for Israel, the Indo-Pacific region, border security and Ukraine. U.S. President Joe Biden strongly supports the package of aid bills and has urged the House to pass it this week.

**Hoping to impart a sense of urgency, Americans from all over the country gathered in Washington, D.C.,**April 12-16for the Ukraine Action Summit, organized by theAmerican Coalition for Ukraine,to advocate for continued U.S. aid for Ukraine.

I think American national security credibility is really at stake, said Eugene Vindman, a Virginia Democraticcongressional candidate, who spoke at the summit. There are countries that are starting to question whether they're in Europe or they're in Asia whether the United States can continue to lead. Vindman hopes that the bills will pass but fears that the cost in Ukrainian lives and in innocent civilians will be extremely high because of the delay. Russian forces regularly shell Ukraine s cities, energy infrastructure, hospitals and cultural institutions, resulting in civilian casualties due to Ukraine's critical lack of air defense systems necessary to protect civilians and residential areas.

**Democracy at work.**When Russia invaded Ukraine two years ago, Ukrainian-American communities rushed to Capitol Hill to seek help for Ukraine and counter Russian propaganda about the war.

It became clear the way Washington, the way a democracy works, citizens have the power, says Dora Chomiak, the CEO of a New York-based human rights organization,Razom For Ukraine, which has just marked its ten-year anniversary and initially was one of the founding members of Ukraine Action Summit. Citizens can use their voice correctly to inform and pressure their representatives in Congress, to make certain decisions in the form of passing certain laws.

These efforts have grown since the first summit in 2022. After months of successful advocacy work, the House passed an important resolutioncondemning Russia s illegal abduction of Ukrainian children from the occupied territories and declaring it a form of genocide. The Senate is now working on advancinga bill to seize frozen Russian assets, known as the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity (REPO) bill, to pay for Ukraine s reconstruction.

It's really important for us to be here right now due to the situation in Ukraine, said Nick Bilogorskiy, the co-chair and co-founder ofNova Ukraine, a charity from Stanford, California. Bilogorskiy, a native of Kharkiv, Ukraine, attending the advocacy summit for the second time, knows first-hand the daily devastation by Russian missiles in his home city and the critical lack of ammunition on the front lines. It just breaks my heart every day to look at the destruction there. And I think that's what drives all of us here today, to try to get the U.S. government to increase their support and advocate for Ukraine here in person on Capitol Hill.

Edward Ma, the founder and president ofEd's Friends Ukraine, came from Texas. Previous summits were effective, Ma says. During the second summit, he says, We pressured Ted Cruz and then he actually became a co-signer of the Repo Act. He thinks that so many concerned citizens arriving from all around the country to apply pressure on their congressmen and senators is making an impression in Washington.

Jonathan Lippert, who came to Capitol Hill from Massachusetts, has traveled to the front lines several times. One of the directors atUkraine Aid Ops, he says that although he appreciates America's support for Ukraine, he s disappointed that the government has been so cautious. I strongly believe that we could give enough for Ukraine to win, he says. Ukraine's troops, he notes, need artillery, ammunition of all types, anti-air missiles and aircraft with substantial capabilities.

**During their 350 meetings on Capitol Hill over the course of two days**, Ukraine Action Summit attendees learned that gaining support for the additional aid sometimes means debunkingmyths about U.S. aid to Ukraine. We told them that there is a lot of Russian propaganda, we feel like Russian propaganda is influencing a wing of the GOP, said Robert Rose, the executive producer ofRaw Travel TVand a forthcoming documentary, My Summer in Ukraine.

Rose met with a legislative assistant of Tennessee Congressman Scott DesJarlais, who has not supported more aid to Ukraine due to concerns that the Department of Defense is not properly overseeing the spending in Ukraine. Rose and other members of his advocacy delegation explained that Ukraine is highly accountable for American aid. The U.S. government hasestablishedthe Ukraine Oversight Interagency Working Group with more than 160 officials across 20 federal oversight agencies tomonitor US aid to Ukraine.

Natalia Lebedin from Ohio encountered a different problem when she met with staff at Congressman Michael Turner's office. He is aRepublican who clearly wants to support Ukraine, but is dealing with ***politics*** within the Republican Party that is preventing him from expediting aid to Ukraine, she says. Turner s office is very reluctant to sign the bill because it wants a decision on aid to Ukraine to come from Republican leadership, House Speaker Johnson, himself. Her meeting took place a day before Johnson announced his plan to move forward with foreign aid bills.

**For those who have seen Russia s atrocities in Ukraine, it s difficult to accept the delay in America s aid and the hesitation of U.S. policymakers to define a clear strategy for Ukraine to win.**

I feel like a lot of what was promised was not delivered and some aid has stalled due to American political games in the election. So that's really disheartening to see, Bilogorskiy of Nova Ukraine says. He wants to see a strategy of defeating Russia and for the U.S. to step up with all its might. I ve lived for more than 18 years in the States, and I believe the U.S. can and should be the leader on a global scale. And we should practice the principles of freedom and democracy, and give Ukraine what it needs, give it now without delay.

As a former U.S. Army colonel, Vindman warns that even if the aid bills passes next week, there will be months of delay until the support arrives in Ukraine. Best case scenario, the aid bill passes but there's still going to be a lot of danger to Ukraine over the course of the next couple of months.

Johnson intends to put the bill on the floor for a weekend vote despite the pressure from hardliners in the Republican Party who take their cue in opposing the bill from former President Trump.

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WASHINGTON, DC - APRIL 17: Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) does an interview with CNN at the U.S. Capitol on April 17, 2024 in Washington, DC. Photo by Kent Nishimura/Getty Images)

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**Edited by Alan Sacks**

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