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As Ukraine Presidential Election Approaches, Merkley and Durbin Introduce Resolution to Support Ukrainian Democracy & Combat Russian Election Interference

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Oregon’s Senator Jeff Merkley, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, today announced that he and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) have introduced a Senate resolution supporting Ukrainian democracy in the lead-up to Ukraine’s upcoming election on March 31.

Merkley and Durbin’s resolution expresses concern about potential Russian efforts to disrupt voting or undermine the legitimacy of results, and asks the Trump administration to brief Congress after the election on the scope and scale of any Russian interference in the Ukrainian presidential campaign.

The Merkley-Durbin resolution expresses support for the principles that “the United States does not prefer any particular candidate in the Ukrainian Presidential election and seeks only a transparent and democratic election that reflects the will of the Ukrainian people; the United States will continue to support democracy and good governance in Ukraine including anti-corruption initiatives as well as independent media and rule of law strengthening efforts to support the ideals of Ukraine’s revolution of dignity; and that the United States should continue to work with allies to provide additional capacity building and technical support in order to deter against Russian efforts to disrupt voting or undermine the legitimacy of the results.”

After Ukraine’s peaceful “Maidan Revolution” in 2014, Russia reacted violently against the burgeoning pro-democracy, pro-Western sentiment in Ukraine by illegally annexing Crimea and launching an invasion in Eastern Ukraine. Russia also pioneered “fake news” disinformation techniques to spread propaganda and sow division within Ukraine. Russia’s anti-democratic intervention in Ukraine was an early warning sign of more anti-democratic initiatives to come. In the following several years, the Kremlin became emboldened following the international fallout from its invasion of Ukraine, and

stepped up its assault on democratic institutions and elections in other Western nations—culminating in its attack on the American presidential election in 2016.

Experts on Russia have pinpointed Ukraine as the “front line” of Putin’s international aggression and war on democratic values. Former U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation Michael McFaul has said that “Russian President Vladimir Putin is waging a global ideological war against Western liberal, democratic values. It has been underway for many years, and it extends from his own immediate neighborhood to Western Europe and, of course, the United States, where he intervened in the U.S. presidential election in 2016. The front line of this ideological war between Putinism and democracy, however, remains Ukraine.”

A copy of the Merkley-Durbin resolution is available [here](#), and the full text follows below.

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RESOLUTION

Sense of Congress on the March 31 Presidential Election in Ukraine

(a) Findings.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Agrees with S. Res 78 from the 115th Congress introduced by Senators Menendez and Graham which expressed the sense of the Senate recognizing three years of Russian military aggression in Ukraine.

(2) Concurs with S. Res 27 introduced by Senators Johnson and Durbin that calls for a prompt multinational freedom of navigation operation in the Black Sea and urges the cancellation of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

(3) Endorses H.R. 596 introduced by Rep. Connelly and Rep. Chabot affirming that it is the policy of the United States not to recognize the de jure or de facto sovereignty of the Russian Federation over Crimea, its airspace, or its territorial waters.

(4) Reaffirms the importance of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–272) which authorized increased security and economic assistance for Ukraine.

(5) Welcomes continuing Congressional resolutions such as H. Res. 202 from the 115th Congress sponsored by Rep. Delaney reaffirming the U.S. commitment to NATO.

(6) Notes the upcoming March 31, 2019 Presidential election in Ukraine and the importance a free and fair election is to sustaining the principles and dreams of the 2014 Maidan Revolution.

(7) Expresses concern that the Russian Federation will continue to interfere in the election process and voting in Ukraine’s March 31st election.

(8) Agrees with former U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation Michael McFaul that “Russian President Vladimir Putin is waging a global ideological war against Western liberal, democratic values. It has been underway for many years, and it extends from his own immediate neighborhood to Western Europe and, of course, the United States, where he intervened in the U.S. presidential election in 2016. The front line of this ideological war between Putinism and democracy, however, remains Ukraine.”

(b) Sense of Congress.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the United States does not prefer any particular candidate in the Ukrainian Presidential election and seeks only a transparent and democratic election that reflects the will of the Ukrainian people.

(2) the United States will continue to support democracy and good governance in Ukraine including anti-corruption initiatives as well as independent media and rule of law strengthening efforts to support the ideals of Ukraine’s revolution of dignity.

(3) the United States should continue to work with allies to provide additional capacity building and technical support in order to deter against Russian efforts to disrupt voting or undermine the legitimacy of the results.

(4) not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President should provide a briefing to Congress—

(A) assessing the scope and scale of Russian interference in the Ukrainian presidential campaign and vote tabulation on election day;
and

(B) assessing the future course of U.S.-Ukrainian relations under whichever candidate is declared the winner.