

Even Republicans have wonderful things to say about Joe. That is not something you see on every Senate Committee.

Joe, I know I speak for all of us, Republicans included, when I say we will miss you deeply. I am so grateful to have had your leadership and friendship as we have steered the Agriculture Committee together. We have an amazing, talented ag staff because of you and your leadership.

I wish you and Virginia and your two beautiful children much success and happiness as you move forward to your new adventures. I know you will be successful, and I look forward to celebrating all the success.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### PROTOCOLS TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY OF 1949 ON THE ACCESSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND AND THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 5, Treaty document No. 117-3, with all remaining provisions of the previous order in effect.

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

Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following: a treaty, which the clerk will state.

The treaty will be stated.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Treaty document No. 117-3, Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 3 hours of debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, on the treaties and resolution of advice and consent to ratification.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, while I know the Senate and the American people's attention has been drawn in many different directions over the past couple of months, and while we are still working through numerous legislative proposals to address real challenges that families across the United States are facing, from high food prices to gas prices to devastating natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, I am here today to encourage my colleagues to support the United States taking an important step forward in affirming our commitment to freedom, democracy, and collective defense; to send a signal to the world that we will unite against those actors who seek to destabilize the supply of food that threatens hunger for millions of people all over the world, who seek to weaponize energy in the

middle of an unprecedented heat wave, and who think they can simply invade a neighbor with no consequences.

As we grapple with the complex geopolitics, Putin's generals are bombing Ukrainian cities. His forces are still largely blockading Ukrainian ports. His soldiers are committing war crimes. These are not only attacks on brave Ukrainians, they are attacks on the rule of international law of which we all want to live by. They are attacks on the international order. They are attacks on one of the most deeply held American principles of a nation's right to determine its own destiny.

And so, I rise today in support of strengthening one of the greatest tools the United States has to bolster our efforts to protect those very democratic values and our citizens: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, known as NATO, one of the greatest alliances the world has ever seen. Welcoming Sweden and Finland into the NATO alliance will signal the United States' ongoing commitment to peace, stability, and democracy in Europe and around the world.

Enlarging NATO is exactly the opposite of what Putin envisioned when he ordered his tanks to invade Ukraine. Indeed, he may have been trying to test the resolve of the alliance. And I am pleased that we have passed that test with overwhelming unity of vision and purpose.

He hoped to quickly gobble up territory to correct what he has called "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century," which, in essence, is the dissolution of what was the Soviet Union with little resistance from the countries who formally united in a values-based front against the ills of that vision for Europe and for the world. But instead of a quick strike, Ukrainians—from soldiers to schoolteachers—bravely fought back.

Instead of a Russian coup in Kyiv, President Zelenskyy rallied his nation. Instead of a divided West, we have been more united than ever. The United States, the overwhelming majority of Europe, and, indeed, the entire free world have come together to support Ukraine, to support democracies and the rule of law, and to defend against brazen authoritarian aggression worldwide.

However, despite the fact that Putin's distorted world view has run into the reality of a reenergized North Atlantic Treaty Organization, this has not dissuaded him. This has not tempered his resentment of the West. This has not stopped him from using food and gas as a weapon of war. This has not curbed the threat of further Russian aggression. And so it is absolutely critical that we take this historic step today and provide our advice and consent to ratifying the accession protocols for Sweden and Finland to join the NATO alliance.

More than ever, it is crystal clear that NATO plays a vital role for the security of the United States and as a

bulwark in protecting peace and democracies throughout the world.

Seventy years ago, democratic nations of Europe and the United States came together to defend the liberty, freedom, and individual rights of their citizens from the threat of a militarized Soviet Union. Now, as then, this defensive alliance serves as a bulwark of stability and the rule of law for the people of its member states. Partnering with our values-based partners serves as a force multiplier for our defensive military capabilities to protect our citizens and advance our interests.

Indeed, the most famous of the articles of incorporation of NATO, article 5, which states that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all, has been invoked only once—only once—when terrorists attacked the United States on September 11 and our NATO allies rallied behind us. The Canadian Air Force was patrolling our skies, and NATO joined us in our collective efforts abroad to hunt down those who had perpetrated the attacks of September 11. We should do nothing in ratification to suggest that we are not committed to article 5.

The U.S. Constitution reigns supreme in all of our actions, so we should not so doubt about our commitment, especially in this time in history. So we are dutybound to carefully consider who we admit into this alliance.

Over the course of its seven-decade history, admission to NATO has been guided by the alliance's open-door policy, as outlined in article 10 of NATO's founding document, and specific benchmarks that every American administration has used since the founding of NATO: Members must have a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; fair treatment of minority populations; a commitment to resolve conflicts peacefully; an ability and willingness to contribute to NATO military operations; and a commitment to democratic civil-military relations.

Sweden and Finland meet and exceed these benchmarks in every respect. Indeed, the qualifications of these two prosperous, democratic nations are outstanding and will serve to strengthen the NATO alliance. These are two steadfast NATO and U.S. allies with strong military and democratic institutions. They have every reason to participate in collective defense against potential Russian aggression, and NATO has every reason to embrace and welcome them into the alliance without delay.

The people of Sweden and Finland and their governments have shown themselves to be strongly supportive of joining NATO, and in many ways, Finland and Sweden are ideal candidates for NATO membership. Both have large, technologically advanced, and growing militaries that are well-positioned to integrate into NATO. Both have partnered with NATO, contributing to operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. And since Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, they have strengthened their relations with NATO even further. They have been engaging in dialogue and consultations. They have been exchanging information, and they have been coordinating training and exercises.

In fact, given geography and history, Finland and Sweden have long equipped their militaries and prepared their societies for the prospect of Russian aggression. Their participation in NATO would reduce the burden on the United States and the whole military alliance. Finland already spends more than 2 percent of its GDP on its defense budget, and Sweden has repeatedly publicly committed to reaching that target as soon as possible. On top of all of this, these are two nations that are models of good governance—two nations that respect and promote human rights.

With just a few detractors, I am pleased that there will be broad bipartisan support for admitting Sweden and Finland into NATO, but let me speak to those few detractors.

Some critics say they don't want us to subsidize these wealthy European nations' security, but, of course, that is not the case. They meet or will soon meet the 2-percent threshold for military spending. We can count on these nations to pull their own weight. If anything, welcoming Finland and Sweden to NATO will reduce the burden on the United States. There is a tremendous urgency and a strong case for inviting these countries, and we must act now.

For those who say that expanding NATO provokes Russia, I would say, after the decades of neutrality that Finland and Sweden have had, they have been provoked by Russia's aggressions in Ukraine to seek NATO membership.

Should we let ruthless autocrats threaten the security of democratic nations and American allies or let them think they can launch ground invasions against peaceful neighbors without consequences? No.

Should we let the fears of an irrational dictator guide U.S. foreign policy? No.

Should we appease a brutal butcher like Putin? No.

The European public says no; the American public says no; and I hope the U.S. Senate says no as well.

So, today, I urge my colleagues to vote yes—yes to providing advice and consent; yes to supporting these historic treaties; yes to welcoming Finland and Sweden—steadfast, loyal allies and beacons of democracy—to NATO; yes to a Europe that is secure and prosperous.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 4723

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, in the month since the Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade*, the assault on reproductive rights by anti-choice MAGA

Republicans—well, it has been relentless.

We have seen and heard the horror stories of women in States that have outlawed abortion. We have seen women and even young girls—children as young as 10—who were raped and unable to get an abortion in their own States. We have seen examples of States looking to restrict—restrict—a woman's ability to travel to other States—restrict a woman's ability to travel to other States—to get the medical care, the often lifesaving care, they desperately need. In fact, this is an issue that Republicans in this Chamber objected to when Democrats brought up a bill to guarantee the fundamental right of women to travel in this country in order to seek care.

MAGA Republicans—oh, wait. They want to strip women of their freedoms, and they want to strip women of their ability to choose what happens to their own bodies. If MAGA extremists have their way in Congress, they will enact a rigid—a rigid—nationwide abortion ban which will threaten women and their doctors with jail time.

Look at what is already happening: Anti-choice States are working to stop women from going to pro-choice States to seek care, and now they are even going after the doctors—after the doctors—in those States, who are simply doing their jobs by taking care of their patients.

This is utterly and completely outrageous. We cannot allow this to happen. That is why Senators MURRAY, PADILLA, LUJÁN, and I introduced legislation to protect doctors in States like Nevada—where abortion remains legal—from facing prosecution by anti-choice States.

Let me be clear. No doctor should ever be jailed for providing women with the reproductive and often lifesaving care they need wherever—wherever—those women are from.

Our bill, the Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act, would do exactly what is in the name. It would let doctors—medical professionals—provide reproductive care in States like Nevada where abortion is legal, without fear of prosecution or fear of jail time.

Our bill would empower the Department of Justice to protect women and their doctors in pro-choice States from anti-choice States' attempts to prosecute them. This means that if a woman from Texas travels to my State of Nevada, a pro-choice State, the Nevada doctor she sees cannot—cannot—be prosecuted under Texas's extreme abortion ban.

We need to pass this now, without delay and without objections, because we must protect women, and we must protect their doctors. We must pass the Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Let Doc-

tors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act.

I am honored to be here with the Senator from Nevada, Senator ROSEN. She is one of the sponsors of this bill, along with Senator MURRAY and Senator PADILLA, who is also here, and Senator BEN RAY LUJÁN and myself in addition to over 20 of our colleagues.

We must pass this bill today. Almost 6 weeks ago—that is all the time it has been. It seems like it has been a lot longer. It has been only 6 weeks since the Supreme Court issued a rule shredding nearly five decades of precedent of protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions.

Now, because of that decision to shred 50 years of precedent, women are at the mercy of State laws or new State laws or Governors. They literally ran to the State capitols—a number of legislators—to see who could get there first to introduce and pass the most extreme bill. Literally, women are at the mercy of State laws that are a patchwork across the country and that, in many cases, leave them with fewer rights than their mothers or their grandmothers had.

This is in spite of what the American people want, as 70 to 80 percent of Americans believe that it is a decision that should be made by a woman and her doctor and not by politicians—not by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. They don't want them making their decisions for them. They want to make their decisions with their doctors.

As if it were not proof enough, after having come here every single week since the Dobbs decision was issued to remind people of where the actual public is out there, look at what happened last night. We heard the majority loud and clear in the Sunflower State of Kansas. The people of Kansas, in a record turnout—doubling the number of Kansans who voted in the last midterm election—voted 59 to 41 percent to protect reproductive freedom. That is more than 530,000 Kansans who showed up at an odd election time. In the middle of the summer, on a hot day in August, they showed up to protect women's rights. For context, fewer than 460,000 Kansans even cast a ballot in the 2018 primary. That is what we are dealing with; yet we now have 530,000 who showed up to vote on one side to say: A woman's right should be protected in their State.

This is a wake-up call to my colleagues who have been resisting action when it comes to allowing women to travel, when it comes to allowing women to be able to make a choice about even contraception, when it comes to, in this bill, letting doctors provide reproductive healthcare.

This doesn't come down to red States or blue States, my friends. People across the country, as I have argued vociferously before—and now I have my proof point—whether they be Independents, Democrats, or moderate Republicans, when they show up, women's

rights are protected. And guess what. They are showing up.

Since this decision came down, I have come to the floor of the Senate again and again with my colleagues to push for commonsense bills to protect women in this post-Roe world. We have tried to preserve a woman's right to travel to other States; that was Senator CORTEZ MASTO's bill. We brought a bill to the floor to give women reliable access to family planning services; that was my colleague Senator TINA SMITH's bill. We tried to pass legislation to make sure everyone could access contraception as well as accurate information about contraception.

We thank all our colleagues for their work on these bills, and I want to specifically mention Senator MURRAY for her work. We are not giving up, not when so much is on the line.

Many of the biggest fights for reproductive freedom are happening on State and local levels. Women as well as their doctors are now in the cross-hairs. Republican State lawmakers are drafting legislation that would make it a crime to provide abortion care to a patient in another State where it is legal.

Let's get this straight. They would make it a crime, where you can't get an abortion—like that little 10-year-old girl couldn't get an abortion, when she was raped, in her own State. She goes to another State, and now we have legislators in certain States who are trying to make it a crime for her to do that. State legislators in Texas and Arkansas have indicated they are considering these kinds of laws, and the Governor of South Dakota, which shares a border with my State, refused to rule out a similar law.

Doctors in Minnesota, where reproductive rights are firmly protected, could be prosecuted for providing completely legal medical procedures for people in maybe North Dakota or South Dakota or Iowa who come to the great State of Minnesota.

The Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act is a straightforward solution. It protects doctors giving abortion care in States where it is legal and stops extreme attempts to investigate or punish them for doing their job.

Women and the providers who help them are already facing so much uncertainty because of the Dobbs decision. We should all be able to agree that, at the very least, States shouldn't be able to target, punish, or arrest out-of-State doctors who are following their own State laws.

Today, each and every one of my colleagues has the opportunity to make clear where they stand. They did that in Kansas last night; they were able to vote. Now, let's have a real vote on this—not stop the vote, actually get it done.

I see my friend Senator BLUMENTHAL, who has been such a leader on this issue, out of the State of Connecticut is here as well as Senator PADILLA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, first, I thank my colleague and friend from the great State of Minnesota for being such a steadfast champion of this issue over so many years and such an articulate and eloquent spokesman.

I am proud to join her and other colleagues, as we have done, week after week since the Dobbs decision, trying to protect a woman's right to decide when and whether to have children, a woman's basic control over her own body, a woman's freedom that the Dobbs decision stripped away and put in the hands of politicians.

The politicians in robes on the Supreme Court, in effect, took those rights away from the women of America, after 50 years of precedent and after everyone thought these rights were absolutely secure.

When I first introduced the Women's Health Protection Act in 2013, the idea that Roe v. Wade would be overruled was absolutely unimaginable. We were trying to fight the disruption of rights piece by piece through State laws that required admitting privileges or width of hallways or waiting times or other kinds of restrictions that constituted an unconstitutional burden on women's rights.

Now, we are in the post-Roe world where the unthinkable has become real. The unimaginable is with us right now, and worse is to come.

The hit list of this Supreme Court includes contraception, marriage equality, the basic right to privacy that is enshrined in the Constitution, the right to be let alone from government interference.

So my Republican colleagues who think we are being alarmists, the unthinkable is with us right now. And we need to provide assurance and certainty to the women of America that they can travel to seek abortion services; that family planning options will be available to them; that contraception rights will be secure. And each time we have come to the floor to seek that recognition of basic rights, the Republicans have blocked us.

So now we are here on a measure called let doctors provide reproductive healthcare—Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care.

There is a really cruel irony to this effort. The doctors and nurses and healthcare providers who were our heroes and remain our heroes—even more so now—during the pandemic and afterward, can be prosecuted criminally for trying to save a woman's life. An abortion that is necessary to that woman's life may be the mission of a doctor who then can be prosecuted criminally.

Now, in Connecticut, we have said—our legislature has made it absolutely clear that nobody in Connecticut is going to be prosecuted, no law enforcement official in Connecticut is going to cooperate with Texas or any other States that criminalize abortion serv-

ices, no evidence from Connecticut is going to be made available to an overly zealous or aggressive prosecutor hell-bent on going after a doctor or a healthcare provider or a woman who seeks abortion services, but Connecticut is the exception. Its safe harbor makes it unusual, not common.

So we need a national law, Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act, that protects the healthcare givers and providers of our Nation to do their job. The Hippocratic oath is, for them, something that goes as deep as our oath of office for us. We are sworn to uphold the Constitution; they, in effect, take an oath to save lives. That is their job, and their lives should not be in jeopardy, nor should their livelihood, simply because they are doing their job.

We have seen, time and time again, that this Supreme Court has no respect for precedent. We have seen State legislators who have no respect for reproductive rights and healthcare. We cannot rely on false reassurances made by Republican colleagues here or anyone around the country because history has already shown us that this Supreme Court has on its hit list these fundamental rights and expanding the restrictions on them.

So I ask my colleagues to join us in unanimous consent for this measure. That motion will be made shortly. I hope that we can join in ensuring that individuals have access to quality healthcare regardless of their ZIP Code, no matter where they live. The women of America deserve this basic right, and the healthcare providers who enable them to protect themselves and who save lives deserve the assurance that they are not going to be the target of a prosecutor hell-bent on making a name for himself or a State legislature seeking to make political points at the expense of a healthcare provider.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, colleagues, on January 24, just 5½ weeks ago, the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade just weeks after Republicans in this Chamber blocked our push to codify the right to an abortion into Federal law.

So since January 24, Democrats have been fighting to ensure that abortion care remains accessible. We pushed to pass a bill that would protect the fundamental right to travel to States where abortion is still legal; Republicans blocked it. We pushed to pass a commonsense bill to expand access to family planning services; Republicans blocked that one too. We pushed to codify the right to contraception; Republicans blocked it. At every turn, Republicans have taken extreme and out-of-touch positions by blocking these commonsense bills.

So today Democrats are standing up to protect doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who are increasingly under attack just for doing

their jobs and providing legal abortions.

Colleagues, I am proud to join Senator MURRAY and our colleagues in this effort to pass the Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act to ensure doctors can provide the reproductive healthcare that women need. Abortion access, after all, is essential healthcare.

Now, I have seen firsthand the incredible work that providers in California do to provide critical reproductive care. Most recently, I have visited a Planned Parenthood clinic in Los Angeles. We are already seeing a chilling effect among healthcare providers driven by the uncertainty of their legal liability—like the alarming lawsuit that was filed against the provider in Indiana who legally helped a 10-year-old rape victim terminate her unwanted pregnancy. So we must make it clear for healthcare providers that abortion restrictions cannot be allowed to reach beyond the borders of anti-abortion States.

The decision of whether or not to have a child is one of the most personal decisions that someone can make—for the students who choose to finish high school before starting a family, for the survivors of sexual assault whose abortion reaffirms the right to choose for their own bodies, for the parents who desperately wanted a child only to learn devastating news about dangerous health risks, for patients whose lives were saved by an abortion because abortion is often critical medical care. Access to abortion should not be dictated by politicians and lawyers.

California and many other States across the country refuse to turn the clock back to an era when abortions were outlawed and dangerous. And, as we saw last night in Kansas, the majority of Kansas voters—in fact, the majority of Americans—agree that women should have access to abortion care.

So we must pass the Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Healthcare Act to protect the courageous women and men delivering essential medical care to those who need it.

While Republicans continue to block our efforts to protect reproductive rights, Democrats won't back down. In the face of these unending attacks on reproductive freedom, we will not give up the fight to protect a woman's right to safe abortion access.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I want to start by recognizing the overwhelming victory for the right to abortion in Kansas last night. Since the day the Supreme Court struck down the right to abortion and upended the lives of women across the country, the American people have been using their voices to speak out against Republicans' extreme bans.

And now, for the first time since the Dobbs decision, they have had the chance to speak with their votes, and

they sent a message loud and clear: People do not want their fundamental rights stripped away. They will not forget Republicans' cruelty in dragging us back half a century, and when abortion is at stake, they are not going to stay on the sidelines.

Last night, the people of Kansas sent a message as clear as any I have ever seen in politics. Now, today, we are going to see if Republicans are finally getting that message or if they are going to continue to ignore the American people, because Democrats are here today with legislation to protect doctors providing legal abortion care and make sure they can do their jobs, practice medicine, and save lives without the threat of legal action.

I really can't believe that we need this bill at all. We are talking about doctors who are following the law and simply want to provide care to their patients. It is not enough for Republicans that their cruel abortion bans have meant appointments that have been canceled; prescriptions that have been denied; doctors who have been forced to wait until patients got sicker, to wait until women are actually at death's door before they can provide lifesaving care.

Nope, they are going to go further than that. Now they are coming after doctors providing legal abortion care too. I really can't emphasize that enough. These doctors are following the law and are still facing legal threats and harassment.

Right now, in Indiana, a doctor is being investigated after providing an abortion for a 10-year-old who was raped. Think about that. A doctor is being investigated after doing their job, after simply providing healthcare—care that can be lifesaving, care that was entirely legal in their State, care that, up until the Republicans' far-right Supreme Court overturned Roe, was legal across the country.

The fact that Dr. Bernard is being investigated after just doing her job and helping her patient is chilling.

I want to be very clear. While Dr. Bernard's story may be in headlines across the country, she is not the only doctor facing threats, and she will not be the last. At this very moment, Republican State lawmakers are drafting legislation that would make it a crime to provide abortion care to a resident even in another State where it is legal.

From talking with doctors back home in Washington, I can tell you, they are following this closely and they are worried. I have heard from providers back in Spokane and across Washington State who are worried that they could face lawsuits that threaten their practices and their livelihoods just for doing their jobs, just for providing care that patients need—care that is, once again, completely legal in my State.

So Democrats are here today standing up for doctors. We have been drafting a bill of our own, the Let Doctors

Provide Reproductive Healthcare Act, and we are proud that Dr. Bernard herself supports this bill.

I want to thank my colleagues Senator ROSEN from Nevada, Senator LUJÁN from New Mexico, and Senator PADILLA from California for their partnership and critical work on this bill, as well as my colleague Representative SCHRIER from my home State of Washington, who is leading the legislation in the House.

This is another simple bill to address a threat we know is far too real. The Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Healthcare Act will protect doctors providing legal abortion care and make sure that they can practice medicine and save lives without fear of legal threats and intimidation. It will make clear that the attacks we have seen on doctors are unacceptable; that politicians should not be harassing or scaring or investigating or threatening or punishing doctors for providing care that is perfectly legal, that patients want, and that, in many cases, is even necessary to save lives.

Democrats are going to try to pass this bill right now because we believe no doctor should be punished for caring for patients and providing legal abortion care. And if Republicans who have claimed they don't want to punish doctors actually mean it, if those words are more than just an empty talking point, more than another broken promise, they will stay out of the way and let us get this done today.

But if they don't—if they block us like they blocked the legislation to protect the right to travel across State lines for an abortion, or like they blocked the legislation to expand family planning services, or like they blocked legislation to protect the right to contraceptives—their obstruction will continue to speak louder than any of their hollow claims about actually caring for patients or families or women.

And even if they stop us from getting this bill done today, they are not going to stop us from continuing to put them on the record and hold them accountable for their positions. They are not going to stop us from doing everything we can to protect the rights and the people they are putting in grave danger. And they are going to have to answer to the people they represent—to patients, to providers, to families—whose lives they are turning upside down.

Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 4723 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, many

Americans are not going to see eye to eye on the issue of abortion. I am glad to see that the Supreme Court did what it did and returned that decision to the people, to the State legislatures. Currently, Indiana is debating that issue.

This bill denies State legislators the right to make laws protecting life in their own States. The bill appears to be dealing with traveling freely across the Nation to get an abortion, but a literal reading of the text proves the true intent of the bill. It is, I think, a backdoor into trying to upend what should be neighboring State legislatures' responsibility. It should be the people in their State that make the decision.

Let's look at section 3(a)(3) of the bill, stating "no individual, entity, or State may restrict . . . a health care provider or any individual entity from providing or assisting a health care provider with reproductive health care services for an individual who does not reside"—who does not reside—"in the State in which the services are to be provided."

Sections 3(a)(1) and 3(a)(2) of the bill specifically include the phrase "lawful in the State." Why is that omitted from the previous clause? I think it is because this bill is an attempt to undermine State laws that protect life by allowing abortions for anyone who crosses State lines and is not a resident of that State.

Not to belabor it, I want to read it one more time, slowly. Once again, this bill reads:

No individual, entity, or State may prevent, restrict, impede, or disadvantage . . . any individual from providing or assisting reproductive health care services for an individual who does not reside in the State.

Senator MURRAY did not mention that it also gives the Department of Justice \$40 million in grant funding to help people sue States that enact policies to protect life. The Department of Health and Human Services is given another \$40 million in funding for any eligible center at Secretary Becerra's discretion. This funding is not protected by the Hyde amendment.

We should not spend \$80 million to undermine State laws on life or impose a legislative backdoor for abortion on demand across the Nation. For this reason, I oppose this bill, and I do object to it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, we have now seen time and again, over the last few weeks, that when it comes to protecting rights and providing healthcare for women and patients and families, Republicans' promises are empty and their positions are extreme.

Democrats just offered a bill to protect the rights of providers to be able to provide abortions in legal States. Democrats recently offered a bill to protect the right to travel across State lines to get an abortion. They blocked it. We offered a bill to expand our Nation's longstanding Family Planning

Program. They blocked that. We offered a bill to protect the right to contraceptives, and they blocked that too. Today, again, we offered a bill simply to protect doctors performing legal abortions, and they blocked that too.

Each one of these bills was incredibly straightforward. Each one of these is common sense. Each time, Republicans have stood in the way of basic protections of Americans' reproductive freedoms.

Democrats are not giving up, and, as we saw last night, the American people are not either. We are going to fight for the right to an abortion. We are going to fight for doctors who are doing their jobs and doing what is best for their patients. We are going to fight for women making their own decisions about their own bodies, their families, and their futures.

And we are going to make sure everyone knows and no one forgets exactly who is standing in the way, exactly where Republicans stand in this fight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

If no time is yielded, time will be charged equally to both sides.

The Senator from Ohio.

UKRAINE

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I am on the floor today with Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN from New Hampshire to join in a colloquy regarding what is happening in Ukraine. This is the 20th time in so many weeks that I have come to the floor to talk about the illegal, unprovoked, and brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Today, I look forward to being with my colleague Senator SHAHEEN, a member of the Ukraine Caucus and someone with whom I have traveled to Ukraine and also to the border of Ukraine and Poland to meet with the refugees.

Senator SHAHEEN is going to talk, I think, a little about how we got to where we are and what we do going forward. I was also recently made aware of the fact that we are going to take up the NATO ratification vote today. And this is to have the United States approve the addition of Sweden and Finland to the NATO alliance. This is great for the alliance. It is great for the United States. And I believe it is also—otherwise, they wouldn't be interested—very good for the people of Finland and Sweden.

They add a lot to the NATO alliance. They are militarily and economically in a position to be valuable contributors. They also, in the case of Finland, share the largest land border with Russia of any country. They have understandable concerns with what they see happening in Ukraine.

I just believe it is very much in our national security interests and the interests of people I represent to have, in addition, even further strengthening of the NATO alliance through the addition of these two partners.

Vladimir Putin thought he was going to split NATO apart when he began his

invasion of Ukraine, I believe. And today, he is finding just the opposite has happened. NATO has come together in ways we have never seen. And we now have, again, the addition of two very strong members of NATO who are longtime allies of the United States and will add significantly to the NATO alliance.

With regard to Ukraine, let's start with a little history. Ukrainians have faced adversity from Russia for hundreds of years. This is not new to them. Russia's oppression of Ukraine is not a 21st century issue. For 300 years, under the brutal rule of the Russian czars, Ukrainians were subjected to repeated efforts to stamp out their language, their culture, and their identity.

In January of 1918, Ukrainians got their first taste of national freedom. While Russia was dealing with the chaos of the Bolshevik Revolution, Ukraine declared its independence from the Russian Empire. Unfortunately, this freedom was short-lived. Just a few years later, the Bolsheviks conquered Ukraine and subsumed it into the Soviet Union.

As an unwilling member of the Soviet Empire, Ukrainians suffered horrific atrocities at the hands of their Soviet overlords. In 1932 and again in 1933, the Stalinist regime confiscated grain harvests across Ukraine and imposed a premeditated manmade famine against the people of Ukraine. This horrific atrocity is known as the Holodomor. Millions of men, women, and children were starved to death in a deliberate effort to break the Ukrainian nation's resistance to communist occupation. Stalin even ordered the borders of the country to be sealed to prevent anyone from escaping this manmade starvation and to prevent the delivery of any international food aid.

In 2018, Senator DURBIN and I introduced a resolution to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Holodomor and to recognize the Commission on the Ukraine Famine's findings that the Holodomor was a genocide—no question.

I am grateful to Senator SHAHEEN, Senator TILLIS, and others who are in the Chamber today for cosponsoring that resolution. It passed in October of 2018 unanimously here in the U.S. Senate.

The Holodomor failed to extinguish the Ukrainian people's identity, as hard as they tried, but it was not the end of the Soviet oppression. In the 1970s, the Soviet leadership imposed a crackdown on Ukrainian intellectuals and those with any sort of leanings toward independence or toward the West. The prisons and gulags became filled with Ukrainian political prisoners as the Soviet Union once again tried to assault Ukrainian identity.

But then, in 1991, after years of oppression, Ukraine finally broke away from its Russian rulers for good. Ukraine declared its independence on August 24 that year, and in December, the declaration was confirmed by a referendum in which over 90 percent of

the Ukrainian people voted in favor of independence.

This chart shows the amazing response of the people of Ukraine to that. Ninety-five percent of the people in the Kyiv area, as you can see, supported independence.

By the way, Russians often say that Crimea really was not part of Ukraine. Well, more than half of the people in Crimea were for independence as well. But Russia's crimes against the people of Ukraine continue to this day.

Last week, a video was circulated online of a Russian soldier torturing and mutilating a Ukrainian prisoner. Unfortunately, it is not an isolated incident. After this, the Ukrainian soldier was shot dead and dragged with a rope into a shallow grave by his Russian captors.

We have all seen the pictures from Bucha—people assassinated, people with their hands tied behind their back. Elsewhere in Ukraine, a Russian missile attack struck a prison in Donetsk that was housing Ukrainian prisoners of war. This chart shows that prison and the fact that it was attacked by missiles.

Many of these soldiers were involved in the heroic defense of the Azovstal steel factory in Mariupol. They held out for weeks against Russian assaults on the plant. At least 40 Ukrainian POWs, maybe more, were killed in this assault. These are POWs. These were soldiers who were lawful prisoners of war, supposedly protected by the Geneva Convention. Russia's murder of these POWs is a war crime. And Russia must be held accountable for this and all its countless crimes in Ukraine.

But following its usual playbook, Russia is spreading massive amounts of disinformation regarding this incident and so many others. They claim that the Ukrainian forces killed these prisoners as a way to discourage other soldiers from surrendering.

This, of course, is nonsense. Among other things, Ukraine needs the manpower. Why would they kill their own soldiers instead of getting them back in a prisoner swap that everybody assumed was going to happen? It makes little sense, but it has never stopped Russia from propagating lies to deflect blame from its own crimes. And, unsurprisingly, the Red Cross still has not been granted access to the site by Russia, which clearly needs more time to cover up the evidence of its involvement before they allow any kind of inspection. Let the Red Cross in.

Those responsible for these atrocities must be held to account. This is one reason why Senator SHAHEEN and I last week cosponsored a resolution to recognize what is happening in Ukraine as genocide.

Across the country, Ukrainian women and children have been subjected to indiscriminate Russian missile strikes and airstrikes. It has killed thousands of innocents; not combatants, noncombatants—children.

A few weeks ago, I spoke about little Liza, a 4-year-old girl with autism who

was killed by a Russian missile strike in Vinnytsia. When Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska was in town a couple of weeks ago, she spoke about a 3-year-old boy who just learned how to use a prosthetic. Imagine that, an innocent 3-year-old boy who has been forced to learn how to use a prosthetic limb because of a Russian airstrike on civilian targets.

These stories are hard to hear and hard to tell, but the world must know about them. This is the reality that all Ukrainians are facing. Unsurprisingly, the people of Ukraine are responding to these atrocities. A possible Ukrainian counteroffensive may be unfolding in the south, in the direction of Kherson. We have heard about this in the popular media.

Kherson is here. It is near the Black Sea Port of Odesa. This southern part of Ukraine is incredibly important for Ukraine's economy, and Russia knows that.

Remember, Kherson was the first major Ukrainian city to fall to the Russian forces after Russia's full-scale invasion began in February of this year. But now, Ukrainian soldiers are conducting missile strikes against Russian military infrastructure in the area to weaken Russia's defenses. They are also conducting limited ground attacks and liberating parts of this territory that Russia has illegally taken. You can see that in light blue.

The significance of recapturing Kherson cannot be overestimated. It would undo one of Russia's earliest successes in the war. It is also important that Ukraine regain control of much of its Black Sea coast as possible. This is the Ukrainian economy's primary connection to the rest of the world. Russia, of course, has sought to capture this coastline in order to economically strangle Ukraine.

We talked last week about what they are doing in Odesa. They finally decided they were going to let ships come out of Odesa, and they made an agreement that they would not continue to bomb Odesa and certainly not bomb any port facilities. Within 12 hours, they bombed port facilities in Odesa. That is how much the Russian commitment meant. But a ship finally has sailed from Odesa, and we hope many more will go.

If Ukraine is successful in its efforts here in the south, it will undermine President Putin and his attempts to make a Russian victory in Ukraine, something that the Russians say is inevitable.

While Ukraine is making progress in the south, Russia is laying the groundwork to try to annex occupied land, particularly in the east, in this area near Donetsk.

Occupation means that the Russians themselves are distributing Russian passports, paying salaries in Russian rubles, and expediting Russian citizens for Ukrainian citizens. There are reports that Russia will stage a sham referendum in this area to try to legitimize their illegal annexation.

Senior Kremlin officials have warned Russia will never leave areas of Kherson, in the south here, where Russian forces have been occupying the territory. Before the invasion, these cities were home to more than 2.5 million Ukrainians in this area—2.5 million Ukrainians.

One prominent Kremlin propagandist said:

Ukraine as it was cannot continue to exist.

This person continued.

There will not be the Ukraine that we have known for many years. It won't be Ukraine any longer.

Clearly, that is the Russian intent. Vladimir Putin has said his ambition is even more. It is to fully restore the borders of the old Soviet Union. We must make sure he knows that Ukraine in 2022 is not Ukraine of 1921, which the Russian Bolsheviks conquered and forced into the Soviet empire.

We know how to help Ukraine to keep this from happening. It is to provide them what they need to defend themselves. We have recently provided Ukraine with what we call High Mobility Artillery Systems, or HIMARS. Many of us have been advocating for that. We are glad to see that there are some HIMARS now in the theater. These have been critical to the recent Ukrainian military successes.

So this Congress has made a difference. We provided funding. We have gotten some equipment into the area that the Ukrainians need to be able to defend themselves and to have some sort of a level playing field with Russia's much bigger Army.

Officials have said that with the help of these HIMARS, Ukraine has taken out Russian high-value targets and destroyed them and saved countless Ukrainian lives. These include ammunition depots and targets from long distances. HIMARS have also conducted many of these strikes in southern Ukraine, I talked about earlier, to make progress here in the Kherson area.

Russians have similar long-range artillery that previously allowed them to fire on Ukrainian forces with impunity. They could sit back and fire and level cities and kill civilians and kill Ukrainian military personnel. But they couldn't be reached by the Ukrainians. Now the Ukrainians have taken themselves out of that danger zone because these HIMARS can balance the playing field and have that longer range and the accuracy they need.

I think there are about 15 in theater now. There are also a few from Germany and a few from the UK. But they need more. They said they need 40 to 50 and the munitions to be able to make them effective. That is something that we should be focused on. We should be focused on providing them, again, what they need to actually win this conflict.

I believe we also have to continue to provide the Ukrainians with other weapons as well, including the Army Tactical Missile System, or the ATACMS. This missile, which can be

launched from the same HIMARS launchers that we have already been giving to Ukraine, has a longer range of 300 kilometers.

In a war like this one that is increasingly becoming an artillery duel, range is a decisive factor. These missiles would allow Ukraine to turn the tables on the Russians, whereas Ukraine used to be outranged by the Russian artillery. With the ATACMS missiles, we would be able to help Ukraine be able to strike important Russian targets with impunity themselves.

This is important because Ukraine is now using these weapons in this counteroffensive in Kherson. The Institute for the Study of War—a think tank here in Washington, DC—has said recently this offensive to take out Russia is in the works, and Ukrainians are using HIMARS to strike targets effectively 50 miles away. It is helping. We made a difference.

Former security adviser to the Ukrainian Government Alexander Khara told Newsweek the state of Russian morale in the south means a counteroffensive “has an excellent chance of success.”

He continued.

The Russians suffer from poor morale, logistical troubles, and the horror of HIMARS.

So the evidence is clear as to why we should continue to send them weapons they need to be able to not just survive but to win this conflict.

By the way, we have hundreds of HIMARS in our stocks that are currently not with Active units. So we have the ability to help more.

This war has now crossed over the 5-month mark. Since before the invasion began, I have come to this floor a number of times to talk about what needs to be done, as has Senator SHAHEEN, as have others. I have mentioned the fact that we sent billions in military aid and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and that it is working. Particularly, as we see with some of these new weapons, it is making a difference.

It will help these brave warriors and their most vulnerable noncombatants—the kids and the children—be able to survive and be able, in the case of the military, to be able to start making progress to push out the Russian invaders.

Democrats and Republicans alike have sounded the alarm with bipartisan pushes and legislation to help Ukraine. We have urged—with success, by the way—that the United States cut off our own Russian oil and gas. We are now urging the Europeans to do the same.

We have talked about the need for more weapons, for more sanctions, to remove all of Russia’s banks’ access to the global financial system—or the SWIFT system—to suspend our tax treaty with Moscow, to explore options to remove other tax benefits, and to remove access to the U.S. market.

All of this is necessary, on the military side, the humanitarian side, the

economic side, and the sanctions side in order to have a victory. I fear sometimes with regard to the military assistance that we have been doing too little, too late.

We can’t continue to do too little, too late. This is a struggle. It is a struggle between freedom and democracy and the right of self-determination on the one hand and on the other hand, Russian aggression unprovoked, a brutal conquest, authoritarianism, and tyranny.

President Putin’s ambitions lie well beyond Ukraine. We must continue to show him the West continues to stand united. We need to show Ukraine the world stands with them. This is why it is so important that Sweden and Finland have chosen to join NATO, and we must support them in that.

All this, by the way, transcends the political spectrum, and I have certainly seen that. Senator SHAHEEN and I have shown that in our work to aid Ukraine. It is not a political issue. It is not a Republican or Democrat issue. We are stepping up in support of our democratic ally together.

As the fight rages on, the perseverance and self-determination of Ukrainians seem to grow even stronger. We have seen their resilience in the face of daily bombardments. We have seen their resilience in the face of Russia’s broken promises when, counter to their commitments, Russia has attacked ports, as I said, and humanitarian corridors.

The Ukrainian people are fighting for their homeland, for their families, for their freedom. It is impressive and inspiring to see what they are doing.

The Senate is going to break for an August recess here in the next few days. Even though we won’t be on the floor every week to continue to fight for the Ukrainian people, we will do so with our work back home, with getting more people engaged and involved in America to help on the humanitarian side. We will continue to promote the fact that the U.S. national security interest is served by helping freedom and democracy.

I want to note something President Zelenskyy said recently in an address to the people of Ukraine. He said:

Strategically, Russia has no chance of winning this war. And it is necessary to hold on, so that even at the tactical levels, the terror state feels its defeat. No matter what happens and no matter what the occupiers’ plans are, we must do our job, protect our state and take care of each other.

Let’s help Ukraine finish this mission, protect their state, their democracy, and take care of each other. Let’s give Ukraine the tools it needs to be able to do that. After these months of fighting and giving aid, the West must not falter during Ukraine’s dire time of need. We must be there through victory for the Ukrainian people—victory for self-determination, victory for freedom.

I yield to my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator SHAHEEN, my partner in this effort.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am really pleased to be able to come to the floor this afternoon to join my colleague from Ohio, Senator PORTMAN. We twice traveled to Ukraine together. I have appreciated his leadership as co-chair of the Ukraine Caucus and his advocacy for not only legislation to help Ukraine but also for these reports which weekly have kept the war in Ukraine in front of the American people, which is so important as we think about how we continue support in our public for what is happening in Ukraine and this fight that the Ukrainians are so courageously waging.

I am also pleased to be here with my colleague Senator TILLIS, who, along with me, cochairs the Senate NATO Observer Group, because we are going to be voting this afternoon on ratification of the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO. Together, we led a bipartisan delegation to Madrid last month, which included three Democrats and four Republicans, and we were able to visit Helsinki and Stockholm on our way into Madrid to talk about just why it is so important that Finland and Sweden are joining NATO.

I wanted to talk about both of these topics this afternoon because they are connected.

As Senator PORTMAN said, there is a reason why Finland and Sweden, after decades of maintaining neutrality, are looking at joining NATO. It is because of this unprovoked, brutal war by Russia against Ukraine. If they are successful in Ukraine, we don’t know where that will end, so we need to make the connection for people.

A year ago, no one would have thought that Sweden and Finland would have wanted NATO membership, but, of course, a lot has happened in that year.

Vladimir Putin made one of the most consequential miscalculations in modern history. I think it is the biggest miscalculation in foreign policy since Hitler went into Russia in World War II. He went into Ukraine to wage this unprovoked, premeditated war upon the people of Ukraine. Part of his rationale was to talk about NATO and his opposition to Ukraine’s joining NATO but also because he thought he would be able to stall the enlargement of NATO. He thought he would be able to split the NATO allies. In fact, just the opposite has happened. The global response to punish Putin for this war in Ukraine is unprecedented. Putin’s barbaric campaign in Ukraine and threats to democracy around the world have resulted in the strongest iteration of NATO to date.

And now here we are. The United States is about to welcome two very capable, very qualified and deserving members into the alliance, which will further strengthen our global coordination to preserve our rules-based order.

I have spoken before in this Chamber about the strong bipartisan support for

Finland and Sweden's NATO membership. When Sweden and Finland announced their intent to apply for NATO membership, Senator TILLIS and I led a letter to President Biden that within about 24 hours was cosigned by 80 of our colleagues, all pledging to support swift ratification of the accession protocols.

Just last month, Senator TILLIS and I led that delegation to Madrid to the NATO summit, and we did it at the request of both the majority leader, SCHUMER, and the minority leader, MCCONNELL.

When meeting with our allies and partners, we talked about our commitment to return to the Senate and to work hard to swiftly ratify the accession protocols, and we have done just that. We had hoped to be the first body to do that ratification. We are going to be the 22nd, which I think is very good news for NATO and for the effort to ensure that Finland and Sweden become members of NATO.

On July 19, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on which Senator PORTMAN and I sit, unanimously voted in support of NATO's accession protocols.

Today's vote is not just important for Sweden and Finland and for NATO, but it is also important for Ukraine, as Senator PORTMAN laid out. The Ukrainian people are on the frontlines of a war for democracy and for our collective shared values—values that underpin the heart of the NATO alliance. Sweden and Finland's membership will bolster our efforts to hold Putin to account as he wages this war to eradicate Ukrainian culture.

Putin's decision to invade Ukraine affirmed what we have long known—that Vladimir Putin does not respect the distinct history, culture, and identity of the Ukrainian people. His view of history, of course, is false. It is distorted, and it is deadly. His unprovoked war in Ukraine is a manifestation of his delusional ideas and his blatant attempt to wipe Ukraine off the map of Europe. But despite the challenges to their sovereignty, for generations, the Ukrainian people have maintained their own traditions, their own language, and their own dream of independence.

Putin is waging propaganda campaigns that seek to justify his goals to the Russian people. He has deployed deliberate, harmful rhetoric of “de-Nazifying” Ukraine. He is pursuing a broader, maniacal agenda to eradicate everything Ukrainian—the land, the people, the language, the culture.

We know that Russia established filtration camps in Russia and Ukrainian territory even before the February 24 invasion. Now reports are that there are over 1 million Ukrainians who have been forcibly relocated to Russia, including about 250,000 children—children who have been taken from their Ukrainian parents and sent to Russia.

We need to call Putin's actions what they are. They are acts of genocide.

After the horrors of the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, Yugoslav wars, the international community vowed to “never again” let such immense human tragedy happen on our watch.

We must not let Putin accomplish his mission of destroying the Ukrainian people and dismantling the international rules-based order which has been in place for more than 70 years. We must hold him accountable because we know that if he is successful, Putin's Russification campaign is not going to end with Ukraine. Who will be next? The Baltic States? Eastern European countries? Romania? Poland?

As Americans, we have a moral obligation to work with our allies to hold Putin to account, and I am proud that this body is doing just that. Last week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which Senator PORTMAN and I are both members, introduced a resolution recognizing Russia's actions in Ukraine as genocide, but, of course, we must do more.

Today's ratification vote is going to be another step in sending a message to both Vladimir Putin and the Ukrainian people that NATO is unified and that we are going to continue to support their efforts to push back against this brutal dictator.

I hope that our colleagues will join us in celebrating today's important moment of NATO's enlargement from 30 to 32 members. This historic accession is a testament to the global commitment to not be bystanders amid a war that violates all international norms and seeks to destabilize our rules-based order. I hope that our remaining NATO allies will move swiftly to advance Sweden and Finland's NATO membership.

Amid Russia's horrific campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Ukrainian people, we must recognize the importance of our shared transatlantic values to push back on Putin's dangerous and bloodthirsty war against Ukraine.

Again, I am pleased that we are here to support both Ukraine and the ratification of Sweden and Finland into NATO. I am sure we will have a very strong bipartisan vote this afternoon, and I look forward to continuing to work with NATO and with our colleagues as we do everything we can to support the success of Ukraine against Vladimir Putin.

I yield to my cochair of the Senate NATO Observer Group, Senator TILLIS. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I want to thank my friend and colleague Senator PORTMAN for his work and his focus on Ukraine, and I want to thank my friend and colleague Senator SHAHEEN. It has been a real pleasure once we started up the Senate NATO Observer Group after it had been dormant for some time. Who knew that it could have been more timely several years ago when we began that process?

I was thinking—I have used this analogy before. I grew up in a family of

six kids. We, even to this day, have our differences and disagreements. I have one sister I am pretty sure wouldn't vote for me if she lived in North Carolina. We are not ideologically aligned. But I know she loves me, and I know, when our family gets threatened, there is no difference between us.

That is what Vladimir Putin saw on February 24. He saw the family of nations in NATO come together like he couldn't possibly have imagined, and he saw two nations, Finland and Sweden, after decades of being nonaligned, saying: Enough is enough. Now it is time to pick between good and evil. And evil is Vladimir Putin, and good is Western democracies—Western democracies like Finland and Sweden which respect the rule of law, which respect the rights of their citizens, which respect the free press, which invest in their military, and which will be a net exporter of security the day they enter NATO.

As a matter of fact, they are already a very valuable asset to NATO. I have spoken with many of my colleagues in the Department of Defense, many people in uniform. They laud the relationship that they have with the military in Finland and Sweden. They work together on exercises. They know that Finland has a formidable ground force. They know that Sweden has a formidable navy that is going to give us added presence in the Baltics and added presence in the Arctic.

The worst possible scenario that Putin never anticipated was a completely unified NATO and the addition of 830 miles—1,340 kilometers—of NATO border right up against Russia. That is what he has gotten for his illegal invasion of Ukraine, and the blood of thousands are on Vladimir Putin's hands.

Now I want to talk a little bit about Finland and Sweden, but I also have to start with that letter. I remember vividly, Senator SHAHEEN, when we were meeting with Swedish diplomats and the Defense Minister, and we were saying: What can we do to send a signal to the people of Finland and Sweden that the United States is absolutely supportive of their accession to NATO?

And they said: Well, communications would be good.

And we said: Well, we will do a letter.

In 24 hours, we got 80 signatures. Now, the question would be, Why not the other 20? Quite honestly, we didn't take the time. Everybody that we went to signed on to the letter, but we thought it was important to get that communication out quickly.

Today, we are going to see more than 95 Senators—I think even more than that—vote for ratification because they understand that Finland and Sweden are investing in their military. They understand that Finland is already at 2 percent and continuing to invest. They know that Finland has already put on order 64 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters.

Why is that extraordinary? Finland is about half the population of my

State, North Carolina, about 5½ million people. They have on order 64 Joint Strike Fighters. We have fewer than 200 in full operation here in the United States. If we, on a per capita basis, were to have as many Joint Strike Fighters as Finland intends to have, we would need more than 4,000.

Now, let's talk about Sweden. Their industrial base is extraordinary. They have advanced fighter technology. They have advanced submarine technology. They have an industrial base that can be mobilized. They have an industrial base that is already developing platforms that are NATO interoperable.

When they come in, they are not going to have to do some sort of NATO 101. They are going to get to work. They are going to continue the work they are already doing.

And, in Sweden's case, there are some members here concerned about burden sharing and hitting the 2 percent mark. When we were in Stockholm, we talked about this. When we met with the diplomatic and Defense Ministers, we talked about this. They are on their way. They are committed. Their government officials are committed to getting to 2 percent funding, and thank goodness.

Maybe that sends a message to some of our other NATO countries that they need to get up there. If anything, Ukraine has taught us that we have to be ready, and we have to be at that level of burden sharing.

But I am not in the least bit concerned with Finland and Sweden meeting their target. They are going to do it, and they are going to do it on short order. I believe that Sweden will be there by 2027, early 2028.

So now, we have to move forward. Now, I am also being a little bit competitive. I am disappointed that we weren't the first nation, but I am also very optimistic. I am thrilled that so many nations have already recognized how valuable they will be as full-fledged NATO allies. So we are going to be 22nd, but we are doing it in record time. Everybody knows here that I describe this place as a "Crockpot." It takes a long time to cook something in the U.S. Senate.

For us to do this in less than a month is absolutely extraordinary, and I hope that the people of Sweden and the people of Finland recognize that that is because the U.S. Senate has full confidence in them. We welcome them readily, and we look forward to their accession. This step in ratifying the treaty is a great step. So I encourage all of our Members to consider voting for Finland and Sweden.

The last thing I will leave you with is that there are some here who say: Well, we can't really worry about Russia. We have to worry about China.

We have to worry about both, and NATO is worried about both. If you look at the strategic concept that came out of Madrid, you should also recognize that there were four coun-

tries from INDOPACOM that were at a NATO summit. They recognize that we have to look at China and recognize the threat. But they also recognize that we have an immediate threat in Europe, and we have to stand together.

With NATO, I am very proud of how the partners came together, and with Sweden and Finland, I am going to be even more proud of our alliance when they are full-fledged members. And we are going to work as hard as we can as members of the Senate NATO Observer Group to make sure that the remaining countries follow suit quickly so that we can welcome both of these great nations into the greatest alliance that has ever existed.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Madam President, I rise today to discuss American national security and the decisions that we must make to keep this Nation safe.

The Senate will vote today on whether to expand NATO by admitting Sweden and Finland. I intend to vote no, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same, and I want to say a word or two as to why.

Finland and Sweden want to expand NATO because it is in their national security interest to do so, and fair enough. The question that should properly be before us, however, is, "Is it in the United States' interest to do so?" because that is what American foreign policy is supposed to be about, I thought.

It is about American security, protecting American workers, defending American jobs, and securing American prosperity, and I fear that some in this town have lost sight of that. They think American foreign policy is about creating a liberal world order or nation building overseas. With all due respect, they are wrong. Our foreign policy should be about protecting the United States, our freedoms, our people, our way of life, and expanding NATO, I believe, would not do that.

Listen, we should tell the truth about the consequences of the decision that we are going to take today. Expanding NATO will require more U.S. forces in Europe—more manpower, more firepower, more resources, more spending—and not just now but over the long haul.

But our greatest foreign adversary is not in Europe. Our greatest foreign adversary is in Asia, and when it comes to countering that adversary, we are behind the game. I am talking, of course, about China. The communist government of Beijing has adopted a policy of imperialism. It wants to dominate its neighbors, dictate to free nations. It is trying to expand its power at every opportunity, and that includes power over the United States.

Beijing wants power over our trade, over our jobs, over our economy. They want us to come to them and beg for market access. They, ultimately, want

to reign supreme as the world hegemon, the world's sole superpower.

And, listen, Chinese leaders have said it themselves. This is no mystery. Beijing wants a world in which the United States—and all other nations, for that matter—are forced to bow before China's might. It is their stated ambition.

This would be a world in which the Chinese Government and its proxies would touch every aspect of our lives, from Chinese goods dominating our markets, to Chinese propaganda flooding our airwaves, to Chinese money and influence corrupting American politics.

This would be a world in which China would be free to expand its use of slave labor and to double down on its global campaigns of repression. That is the world that Beijing wants, and the truth is we are not now in a position to stop them.

Let me say that again: The truth is we are not now in a position to stop them. That is a hard truth, but it is the truth, nonetheless, and the American people deserve to hear it. Our military forces in Asia are not postured as they should be.

The commander of our forces in the Indo-Pacific has testified to this on multiple occasions. We do not have the weapons and equipment we need in the region. We don't have enough advanced munitions. Sealift and airlift are far short of where they need to be. Attack submarines are some of the most important assets we have in Asia and Europe, but they are already in short supply and the fleet is sinking.

On top of all of that, we do not yet have a coherent strategy for stopping China's dominance in the Pacific, beginning with the possible invasion of Taiwan, and we are not committing the attention and resources we need to develop and implement that strategy.

Why aren't we prepared to do what we need to do in Asia? Well, because we have been distracted for too long—for decades—by nation-building activities in the Middle East and by legacy commitments in Europe.

So now, the choice is this: We can do more in Europe, devote more resources, more manpower, more firepower there, or—or—we can do what we need to do in Asia to deter China. We cannot do both. We cannot do both.

The Chief of Naval Operations recently testified that the joint force is simply not sized to handle two simultaneous conflicts. That is the reality. Both the 2018 and the 2022 national defense strategies—which were developed, I might point out, by different administrations of different political parties—reached the same conclusion.

We have to choose. It is not enough to simply say that China is the pacing threat or to say that the risk to Taiwan is real. We must do something about it. We have to prioritize. We have to focus, and that means we have to do less in Europe in order to prioritize America's most pressing national security interest, which is in Asia, with regard to China.

Now, this isn't to say that the United States should abandon NATO, but it is to say that our European allies really must do more. They must take primary responsibility for the conventional defense of Europe and rely on U.S. forces for our nuclear deterrent and select conventional assets.

And this is not just so that America can focus on China, although that is of overriding importance to us. No, this is also about NATO's future. European allies have to step up now or risk leaving NATO exposed if the United States and our forces are pulled from Europe into a conflict in the Pacific.

Every European ally must make necessary investments now for today's threat environment or risk the worst, but NATO isn't doing that. Our European allies are far from where they should be. You know, NATO states agreed years ago, back in 2006, to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defense, but many NATO members still haven't met that pledge. Meanwhile, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe testified a few weeks ago that our allies need to spend more than 2 percent just to meet existing—existing—ground force requirements, which brings us back to Sweden and Finland.

Both countries are longtime NATO defense partners and strong opponents of Russian imperialism. Both occupy important geography. They are also advanced economies with capable militaries, and I respect all of that. But Finland and Sweden's admission would also bring distinct challenges. Sweden still isn't spending 2 percent of GDP on defense, and it doesn't plan to until at least 2028. Finland has announced a one-time defense spending boost, but it is not clear whether it will sustain those higher investments, which, again, are the minimum investments needed for NATO.

Now, some say we shouldn't worry about any of this. Some say Finland and Sweden can defend themselves and won't require anything through the United States or our NATO allies. But if that were true, why join NATO?

The truth is, both countries want NATO's help defending themselves. That is why they are applying for membership—and fair enough. But because so many current NATO allies have spent years underfunding their militaries, it will be the United States that will be asked to send forces to help defend Sweden and Finland in a time of crisis. Even absent a crisis, NATO expansion will mean more U.S. forces and U.S. firepower in Europe for the long term.

Now, if we want to make NATO stronger, the right course is to increase the amount that member states spend on their own defense—say to 2½ percent—and press our European allies to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense. But this administration—it is going in exactly the opposite direction. They had the chance to push for greater European military spending and investment at

the recent Madrid summit. They didn't do it. Instead, the Biden administration has committed the United States to massive spending in Ukraine, far outpacing our European allies, even as they surged tens of thousands of troops into that region, apparently for good.

Now, some say expanding NATO will allow the United States to do less in Europe. I wish that were true, but how can it be when NATO is overdependent on American support right now? How would increasing NATO's security needs somehow magically enable the United States to do less? The fact is, NATO expansion will generate new requirements. Sweden has already asked the United States to increase its naval presence in the Baltic area, for example.

Now, make no mistake, expanding NATO means expanded obligations for the United States in Europe. That is the nature of a security commitment.

Some say we need to expand NATO in Europe to deter China in Asia. But China isn't going to be deterred by the number of our commitments in Europe; China is going to be deterred by our power to deny their imperial ambitions in Asia. That is it. That is the whole ball game.

We cannot strengthen our deterrent posture in the Pacific if we are sending more forces and resources to Europe to defend new allies. That is the bottom line.

Finally, some say we can't beat China by retreating from the rest of the world, but I am not arguing for retreat, and I am not arguing for isolation. What I am arguing for is an end to the globalist foreign policy that has led our Nation from one disaster to another for decades now. What I am arguing for is the return to a classic nationalist approach to American foreign policy, the one that made this country great; a foreign policy that is grounded in our Nation's interests and in the reality of the world as it is, not as we wish it was or not as we once hoped it would be.

In years past, NATO was a bulwark against an imperial Soviet Union. Today, the world's greatest imperial threat is in Asia, and the hour to address that threat is growing very late.

We owe the American people this truth. We owe them a clear accounting of facts. We owe them the courage to make tough choices. Today, I submit that means voting against expanding NATO and focusing where we must, to do what we must, to deter an imperial China. This isn't an easy vote, to be sure, but it is the right one for our security, for our prosperity, for our people, for our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The senior Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today in support of Finland and Sweden's application to join NATO. I give my strong support to this applica-

I disagree heartily with our colleague from Missouri. I know you know, Madam President, having worked on this issue, as I have—having visited these countries, we know how important they are to Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Minnesota has a special bond with the Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of Finland, and at the core of this bond, at the core of the bond between our country and these countries, is shared values—values of democracy, values of freedom.

Yes, we have challenges—of course we do—in Asia, but I happen to believe that when you are a great power like the United States of America, you can do two things at once.

Let's look at what these countries add to our security by joining NATO.

First of all, Finland is over 2 percent of their budget on military. Sweden is increasing their budget on military. Both nations have professional militaries. They have strong and transparent economies, and mostly they believe in human rights—in freedom, in liberty, and equality. They believe in democracy.

I will note specifically that Finland has added an extra \$2.2 billion in defense spending this year. Greece and Poland and Lithuania and Latvia and Estonia and Slovakia and Croatia and the United Kingdom—above 2 percent.

So let's get the facts straight here, and let's talk about what these countries will add to our security.

We are at an unparalleled moment in history. Since Vladimir Putin's cruel, unjustified invasion of Ukraine, people all over the world have been waking up out of a 2-year plague, out of a slumber, to realize just how fragile our democracy is.

We realized it here in this building when, not so long ago, insurrectionists invaded this Chamber. We didn't just sit back and say: Well, there goes our democracy. We stood up. We stood up, Democrats and Republicans, in this very Chamber.

When President Zelenskyy of Ukraine took to the streets the minute that this invasion started and looked at a video camera and said: We are here, he was saying that to his own people to give them the courage to stand up against the inhuman barbarism of a dictator, but he was also saying it to the rest of the world.

We see it on Ukraine's frontlines, where everyday people took up arms and are taking up arms to protect their country. It sent a warning shot to tyrants around the world who believe that free democracies are just up for grabs. Ukrainians have shown their true colors in bright blue and yellow, which just happen to be the colors of Sweden. They have shown their true colors, and they are showing the world what courage is all about.

Having been in the last group of Senators from this Chamber who met with leaders in Ukraine just a few weeks before the war started, I can tell you

this: The people of Ukraine want to choose their own destiny, and the moral flame they have lit across the world will not be doused.

Russia's unprovoked aggression in Ukraine has changed how we think about the world's security. That is why I strongly support the decision of these two great democracies, Sweden and Finland, to join the most important and defensive alliance in the world—NATO.

When President Biden met in May with Finnish and Swedish leaders about their application to join NATO, he said the people of Sweden and Finland—he said to them that they “have the full, total, and complete backing of the United States of America.” We supported that. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations echoed its support with an overwhelming bipartisan vote just last month. Our leaders support this pact.

By joining NATO, allies made a sacred commitment to one another that an attack on one is an attack on all. The only time in history this has been invoked was after 9/11, when the United States was attacked, and all our allies rallied to our side. As Americans, we have never and will never forget that.

In June, we celebrated the anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. NATO was formed in the wreckage of World War II. When President Truman signed the North Atlantic Treaty, he expressed the goal of its founders “to preserve their present peaceful situation and to protect it in the future.” And for decades, it has been crucial to upholding that peace.

Now, 73 years later, NATO is as important as ever, and the recent decisions made by our great friends, the great countries of Sweden and Finland, are a testament to the continued promise of this alliance.

As Swedish Prime Minister Andersson said in May:

With Sweden and Finland as members, NATO will also be stronger. We are security providers with sophisticated defense capabilities.

That is correct.

And we are champions of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

That is correct.

As Finland's leaders, President Niinisto and Prime Minister Marin, also said:

NATO membership would strengthen Finland's security. As a member of NATO, Finland would strengthen the entire defense alliance.

I had the honor of being on a panel at the Munich Security Conference with President Niinisto, and I saw firsthand his commitment to the democracy in Finland and to the democracy all over the world.

Finland and Sweden are already among our closest partners on a range of issues. They are already important contributors to the international community, including in the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and other international organizations.

Finnish and Swedish troops have already served shoulder to shoulder with U.S. and NATO forces in Kosovo, in Bosnia.

In 1994, Sweden and Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program, strengthening our official relationship and coming one step closer to being a full-fledged NATO member.

NATO, Finland, and Sweden have partnered together on securing the Baltic Sea region through regular conversations and exercises—a practice that will be even more important now.

In 2018, Finland, Sweden, and the United States signed a trilateral agreement to deepen defense cooperation and promote security in Northern Europe.

Both Finland and Sweden are already working in coordination with the United States and other allies and partners to support brave Ukrainians standing up to Vladimir Putin.

Sweden has responded to Russia's bombing of maternity hospitals with millions of dollars of support and helmets and body shields, as well as billions for the refugees flowing from Ukraine. Finland has sent military aid, including thousands of assault rifles and 70,000 ration packages, and has offered millions of dollars in humanitarian aid.

Both nations also have the potential, as I noted, to bring huge assets to this alliance, not, as my colleague from Missouri implied, to somehow make things harder. Are you kidding? Maybe he hasn't seen these countries. I have.

Finland, after fighting its own territorial wars with the Soviet Union, has a reserve force of 900,000 strong. Sweden has built its own fighter jets. Both countries recently announced upcoming expansion and reform of their militaries.

As the Arctic region, which holds increasing importance for U.S. and European security, sees encroachments from Russia and China—may I add to my colleague from Missouri—Sweden and Finland are poised to help NATO confront these challenges.

I am here to give my full support for Sweden and Finland entering NATO. As we made clear, we stand with Sweden, we stand with Finland, and we stand with democracy.

Russia's war in Ukraine—a full-scale, unprovoked, and premeditated war against a sovereign and democratic country—has changed Europe and the world, but it has also demonstrated the importance and resilience of our transatlantic alliance. We have all witnessed the bravery of the Ukrainian people as they fight for their lives, and we are proud to stand with them.

This is about the future of political freedom, economic freedom, technological freedom, and, yes, democratic freedom.

Finland and Sweden taking the step of NATO membership will not only strengthen their own security but the cause of freedom in Europe and around the world.

I would say, when things are tough, we keep our friends closer, and I believe that this strong NATO and the inclusion of Sweden and Finland will actually help us with the rest of the world, not just with this conflict in Ukraine.

So I ask my colleague from Missouri, who is not here right now, to consider that as we look at our alliances and how we deal with China. We must strengthen our trade alliances. We must strengthen our military alliances. Certainly, including Finland and Sweden as a member of NATO is one big positive step.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, today, the Senate exercises one of our unique and most important constitutional responsibilities: debate and ratification of a treaty.

The NATO accession treaty for Sweden and Finland is the most consequential kind of treaty because it commits America to the mutual defense of another country. We commit, along with our NATO partners, to come to Sweden's and Finland's defense if they are attacked, just as Finland and Sweden will come to our defense if we are attacked. It is a weighty matter, indeed.

I want to explain why, if one honestly considers all the circumstances and weighs all the evidence, I don't believe this is a close debate at all.

If Finland and Sweden join NATO, the alliance will unquestionably be stronger. The risk of war and of America being dragged into war will decrease in Europe, and Vladimir Putin's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine will backfire in another significant, lasting way.

I note at the outset how unusual this moment is. Finland and Sweden are historically neutral countries. Sweden has refrained from joining military alliances since the days of Napoleon. Once Finland obtained independence a century ago, it also charted a course of neutrality, even after the Soviet Union invaded Finland during World War II.

Now these historically neutral countries have petitioned to join NATO. Why? Sweden and, especially, Finland have always lived closer to the bear's den, and thus had a different relationship with Moscow than we do. But now the Russian bear is rampaging, mauling a sovereign country on its borders that is not in the ranks of NATO. Finland and Sweden naturally want to avoid Ukraine's fate. They concluded, reasonably enough, that there is strength in numbers, and they are right about that.

If I were sitting in Stockholm or Helsinki, I would want to join NATO, too. But we are here in the United States Senate. What matters to us—what should matter to us—is what is in it for us. Much as we may esteem the Finns and the Swedes—and we should; they are great people—we need allies who enhance our common defense, not ones

who detract from it, allies who can pull their own weight and then some.

Military alliances are not charities, but Finland and Sweden aren't charity cases. They bring into NATO their well-trained and well-equipped militaries, technologically advanced economies, and vital geography.

In particular, Finland is a country of warriors, with a long and proud tradition, to put it bluntly, of fighting and killing Russian invaders. In 1939, Russia launched an unprovoked war of aggression—odd how Russia keeps doing that—against Finland, in what has become known as the Winter War. Few observers gave small Finland a chance, but the outnumbered and outgunned Finns shocked the world—not least Stalin and the Russian communists—by matching the Red Army blow for blow.

Ever wonder where the term “Molotov cocktail” comes from? The Finns gave it to us. What they lacked in anti-tank weapons, they made up in grit and courage. Finnish soldiers rushed Soviet tanks and dropped the bottle bombs inside them, and they named the cocktail after Russia's deceitful Foreign Minister for good measure.

Then there is the legendary sniper Simo Hayha, who killed an estimated 500 Russian soldiers, among the highest number of confirmed sniper kills ever recorded in combat. He entered into the history books better known by his well-earned nickname, “White Death,” which also happens to be what every Russian general to this day fears from another tangle with the Finns.

The Finns also haven't forgotten the lessons of the Winter War. Still today, every adult Finnish man must fulfill a period of national service. Almost all of them choose the military. Finland has a 900,000-man reserve it can draw on in times of crisis and can field an army of 280,000 when fully mobilized. Finland's reserves are larger than the reserves of France, Germany, and Italy—combined.

Finland has firepower in addition to manpower. According to scholars at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, Finland has one of the strongest artillery forces in Europe, with more rocket launchers and howitzers than France, Germany, or the United Kingdom. It has a strong fleet of fighter jets and plans to buy 64 American-made F-35s by the end of the decade.

For its part, Sweden is an economic and industrial powerhouse that will add muscle to the alliance. The Swedish Navy is an effective force with advanced warships and submarines. The Swedish firm Saab produces some of the world's finest fighter aircraft, radar systems, and weapons. In conjunction with the British, the Swedes manufacture the NLAW anti-tank missile, which is second only to the Javelin in killing Russian tanks in Ukraine. I would also add that the Swedish firm Ericsson, along with the Finnish firm Nokia, are among the

world's few alternatives to China's Huawei for advanced 5G telecommunications hardware.

Finally, I should note that Finland and Sweden, unlike too many of our European allies, are putting their money where their mouths are when it comes to their defense. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Finland boosted defense spending by 70 percent and will spend more than 2 percent of its total economy on its military this year. Sweden is in the middle of doubling its defense spending and plans to reach that 2-percent goal no later than 2028.

For these reasons alone, Finland and Sweden are not only worthy additions to the alliance but, indeed, will become two of the strongest members of the alliance from the moment they join.

But that is not all. They also add key geographic advantages to our alliance.

First, the Swedish island of Gotland is an unsinkable aircraft carrier in the middle of the Baltic Sea—fewer than 200 miles from the Russian exclave and military base in Kaliningrad. He who controls Gotland controls the Baltic, which is why Russia tried to seize Gotland in the 19th century and why Sweden garrisoned the island during the Cold War. In the event of a conflict with Russia, NATO forces on Gotland could prevent the Russian Navy from transiting the Baltic Sea freely or from resupplying Kaliningrad by sea. Gotland-based forces would also make it easier to relieve the Baltic States by sea and air in the event of a Russian invasion.

Second, Finland controls the northern shores of the Gulf of Finland, through which Russian ships must pass to reach St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city. Our NATO ally Estonia already controls the southern coastline of this long and narrow waterway that is not even 30 miles wide at its smallest point. By adding Finland to the alliance, Russian naval operations through the gulf would become even more difficult.

Third, the Danish Straits would also become, in effect, NATO waters. Russia's Baltic Fleet must pass through this strategic chokepoint to get in or out of the Baltic. Denmark, a NATO ally, controls the southern and western portions of the straits. Sweden controls the northern and eastern shores. By adding Sweden to the alliance, we further complicate Russia's naval operations.

Fourth, the 800-mile border of Russia and Finland rightly complicates Russia's war planning and defense in the event of conflict. In fact, this border would more than double the amount of border that Russia must defend. Finland will also threaten Russia's major military installations in the Kola Peninsula, where Russia's largest and most advanced naval forces are positioned to break out into the Atlantic and threaten the United States.

So aside from their military strength and economic power, Finland and Swe-

den also allow us to turn the Baltic into a NATO lake, bottle up Russia's Baltic Fleet, cut off its isolated military base at Kaliningrad, and expose Russia itself to much greater risk in the event of a conflict.

All things considered, then, one might contend that Finland and Sweden are the strongest candidates to join NATO since its origin in 1949. We will soon see that most Senators agree, when we vote later today.

And, really, how can one disagree? After all, the last countries to join NATO, Montenegro and North Macedonia, were each approved by the Senate with only two “no” votes. Those countries brought their own case for accession to NATO. But let's be honest. Who can deny the much stronger cases for Finland and Sweden, countries that are far larger and far more capable and far more strategically situated?

It would be strange indeed for any Senator who voted to allow Montenegro or North Macedonia into NATO to turn around and deny membership to Finland and Sweden. I would love to hear the defense of such a curious vote.

But since some observers have criticized their bid for membership, let me address those arguments now.

The most basic argument isn't really directed at Finland or Sweden, but at NATO itself. Some critics say America shouldn't pledge to protect countries halfway around the world, but these critics are seven decades too late. We are already treaty-bound to defend more than two dozen nations in Europe. Whether we support this treaty today or not, we will still be treaty-bound to defend those nations. So the real question today is whether adding two capable and strong nations to our mutual defense pact will make us stronger or weaker. The evidence I have shared demonstrates that adding Finland and Sweden will indeed make it stronger, more likely to deter Russian aggression and to defeat Russian aggression, should it come.

Next, some opponents contend that admitting Finland, in particular, is a liability because the United States would be committing to the defense of its 800-mile border with Russia. This argument is both alarmist and backward. It is alarmist because Russia hasn't attacked a NATO member in its more than 70-year history, even as it has attacked many non-NATO countries. Given the Russian Army's pitiful performance in Ukraine, they will be in no shape to break with that record any time soon. And of all European nations, Finland is probably the least likely to be attacked by Russia after the searing trauma of the Winter War. “White death” is a strong deterrent.

Moreover, these critics are thinking about this issue backward. As I said earlier, it is Russia that has to worry about its long border should it attack our allies. NATO is a defensive alliance. It always has been, always will be. Neither Finland nor any other NATO country has any plan or desire

to invade Russia. But should Russia ever be tempted to attack NATO, the Finnish border creates nearly insurmountable war-planning dilemmas for the Russian general staff. To borrow what U.S. Grant told his commanders about Robert E. Lee, rather than worrying about what Russia might do at Finland's border, Russia should be worried about what NATO would do if Russia attacks us. Putin seems worried, after all. He blustered and threatened consequences if Sweden and Finland sought NATO membership, but he meekly acquiesced once they did.

Still, other critics say our main strategic focus should be on China, not Russia. I agree. China is the greatest long-term threat to the United States, but admitting Finland and Sweden to NATO enhances our common defense, especially our defenses in Europe. A NATO that is stronger militarily, economically, and geographically in Europe is a NATO that needs to lean less on American power. We ought to welcome strong, capable allies in Europe who can free up the American military to focus more on the Pacific theater. That is doubly true when those allies have key companies, like Ericsson and Nokia, that can also help us beat China in the global technology race.

Others have objected that the majority of NATO members are currently failing to pay their fair share toward our common defense. I agree here too. I am tired of freeloading, grandstanding friends. But how is that a criticism of Sweden or Finland? As I said, Finland already pays its fair share, and Sweden has charted a clearer path there than have many current NATO members, and both nations are doing so for a reason more durable than diplomatic sweet talk—perceived danger.

Some claim that expanding NATO will provoke Russian aggression, but the fact is, NATO expansion is the result, not the cause, of Russian aggression. Countries are banging on NATO's door because of Russia's behavior. Indeed, Russian aggression is the cause of today's debate. As I mentioned earlier, Sweden and Finland have long histories of neutrality. Vladimir Putin's violence toward his neighbors has now made that neutrality untenable in their minds.

Finally, a few critics of NATO expansion love to quote the words of George Washington's Farewell Address. It is true our first President warned against "permanent alliances," and he recommended "as little political connection as possible" with other nations. That advice was well-suited for a young, weak Republic in 1796. Yet Washington didn't stop writing where these critics stopped reading. That great statesman foresaw a future when America would gain strength, stand up, and assert itself.

Washington continued:

With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions,

and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency, which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

We have gained, since Washington's time, the command of our own fortunes. One of the pillars of our strength in modern times is our network of allies and partners in the Old World. These beachheads and lodgments of freedom help us keep the awful power of modern war at a distance. Finland and Sweden are two such nations. They have asked to join our mutual defense alliance, and they are worthy partners.

I urge my colleagues to grant their request, ratify this treaty, and welcome two more strong beachheads and lodgments into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, to the speaker who has just finished speaking, before he leaves the floor, he and I share the same initials, TC, and in this case, we share the same views on an important issue. It is great to have the TCs—the Tango Charlies—speaking from the same hymn book.

On a lighter note, some of the conversation here today is pretty serious. This is a serious matter, but I want to make it, maybe, a little bit lighter.

I am reminded today of the words of Harry Truman, our former President, who used to say that the only thing new in the world is the history we forgot or never learned. The only thing new in the world is the history we forgot or never learned.

I want to take, if you will—as Presiding Officer knows, every Tuesday, we have our caucus lunch, and the Republicans have theirs. Unfortunately, we don't dine together enough. But, at our caucus lunch, we have a history moment or a history minute—maybe a minute or 2. It is always one of the highlights, frankly, of the time we spend together. And I want to just look back a little bit in time as we take up, today, an issue that is right before us.

As it turns out, the first Swedes and Finns came to America about 384 years ago. They themselves were from a place called Kalmar, Sweden. At the time, as we have heard from others who have spoken, Sweden and Finland were the same country. There was no Finland. All the Finns lived in Sweden, and they continued to live in Sweden for a good long time. I think the Swedish lived—1809, the Swedish rule over Finland officially came to an end, and Finland separated from Sweden.

But when the two ships, the *Kalmar Nyckel* and the *Fogel Grip*, set sail from what was then Sweden, across the Atlantic Ocean toward the Western Hemisphere, they got close to land and ended up sailing north into what later would become the Delaware Bay. They sailed further north into what would become the more narrow channel of the

Delaware River. They continued to sail. They didn't go as far up as what is now Philadelphia, but they came across an uncharted river that went to the west. It was kind of a left turn off the Delaware River to the west. They sailed for about a mile, maybe a mile and a half.

They decided that they would put down their anchors, and there was a bunch of rocks—big rocks—along the side of that river. They put down their anchors and declared that spot to be the colony of New Sweden. It is what is now Wilmington, DE—the colony of New Sweden. They raised their flag and said: This is where we are going to make our stand.

That was, I think, maybe the first European colony, at least in my State, that was created. Later, it was taken over, I think, by the Dutch and then by, maybe, the British. But, initially, it was the Swedes and the Finns who colonized that spot.

Delaware has one of the newest national parks in America, and it is a different kind of national park. It tells the story of Delawareans who were involved in the earlier history of the settlement of our country in leading up to the ratification of the Constitution on December 7, 1787, which took place in Dover, DE, our State capital, and Delaware became the First State. For 1 whole week, we were the entire United States of America. Then we opened it up and let in Maryland and Pennsylvania and 47 or so more, including Wisconsin. I think, for the most part, it has turned out pretty well. We have had some bumps in the road as the Presiding Officer knows.

The colony of New Sweden was in place for probably about 20 or 25 years. Then the Dutch took over, and then the British sort of took over the region in 1664. When the Dutch created the colony of New Sweden in what is now Wilmington, DE, they also built a church. They built what is now known as Old Swedes Church. We have got a lot of churches in this country and a lot of different faiths. The Old Swedes Church is believed to be, maybe, the longest continuously serving church in America.

How is that for history?

It is part of our national park that we created. We had somebody working on it for years, and we created it a decade or two ago. Old Swedes Church is still there; it is still doing the Lord's work.

This is a beautiful, beautiful picture. This is the *Kalmar Nyckel* at full sail. This is one of two ships that brought the Swedes and Finns to America—all 384 years ago. This is the Swedish flag over here, and this is the Delaware flag over here. The *Kalmar Nyckel* literally has a permanent place to be maintained and anchored along the Christina River.

I went to the Biden Station this morning to catch the train to come down here, as I do most mornings. If I had just not gotten on the train and

had headed down the river for about a mile, I would have come to this ship right on the Christina River. It has set sail many places around the world. It is really the ship that represents our State, which used to be the colony of New Sweden.

We all get to meet people from different places around the world, and I have been privileged to meet a lot of Swedish Americans. It turns out that there are more Swedish Americans than there are Swedes in Sweden. Let me say that again. There are now more Swedish Americans than there are Swedes in Sweden. There are a bunch of them, and they contribute to our country and certainly to our State in many, many different ways. I work a lot on economic development and always have as Governor and even now, and some of the finest businesspeople I have ever met are Swedes, of Swedish extraction.

I have a funny story, if I could. Every 25 years, the King and Queen of Sweden come to revisit the colony of New Sweden, and we have a big celebration for a couple days right along the banks of this river, the Christina River. By the way, all those years ago, when the first Swedes and Finns came ashore, they named the Christina River after their child Queen, who at the time was—you won't believe it—12 years old, 12 years old. Imagine peaking at the age of 12 and becoming a Queen or a King. Of course, the Christina, that river, is named after her.

I like to point out to women who are named Christina—I tell them that their heritage, their name, actually goes back to all of those years when the first Swedes and Finns came here and helped to settle our country.

Anyway, once every 25 years, the King and Queen of Sweden come to visit us. In 2013, King Carl XVI and Queen Silvia of Sweden came to Delaware for several days. We had a huge celebration on the banks of the Christina River, and I had the privilege of sitting next to the Queen during dinner. It was a big banquet with hundreds of people in black tie. It was a beautiful evening with great music and wonderful speeches. And she and I just had a delightful time talking over dinner.

We talked about the arts. I like films, and I believe the Presiding Officer is a big film buff. One of my early favorite directors is Ingmar Bergman, a Swede, who made great films for many, many years. We talked about his films and the films that actually touched our lives and helped shape our lives. We talked about music. We talked about music.

I said to the Queen of Sweden: Your Highness, I don't know where I got this, but for some reason, I make the connection between you and the singing group ABBA.

Now, Ingmar Bergman is one of the greatest film directors of all time. ABBA, a Swedish singing group, is, I think, maybe the top-selling singing

group in the history of the world. They actually still record from time to time.

But, anyway, I said to Queen Silvia: Is there any connection between ABBA and you and your husband? Is there?

She said: Well, there is.

I said: Well, what is it?

And she said: The night before we were married in Sweden, there was a huge celebration and a concert, an outdoor concert, with tens of thousands of people.

She said: The headline group for the concert was ABBA.

I said: No kidding? Did they sing?

And she said: That was the night they debuted the song "Dancing Queen."

It is, maybe, one of the best pop songs I have ever heard. I won't say that we sat there and hummed a few bars, but maybe we did.

We have a lot in common with the Swedes and the Finns. We share a lot of likes and, really, very much appreciation, if you will, of the arts and of film, including music. We are a country that prides itself on our free enterprise system, but we know how to do it with a heart. So do the Swedes.

Look up the term "no-brainer." You won't find it in the dictionary, but if you look up the term "no-brainer," it would say: this vote today and the issue that is before us.

Why in God's name wouldn't we want the Swedes and Finns to join us together?

LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER is our Congresswoman. We have only one. She is our Congresswoman. In Delaware, she has a saying that she talks about: Sticks tied together can't be broken. Sticks tied together can't be broken.

With one stick—phew—you are going to break it; but if you pile a bunch of them together, you can't break them. The same is true here. The admission of Finland and the admission of Sweden into NATO makes that band of sticks even stronger and that much harder to break.

I am just delighted that we have an issue where there has been a fair amount of dissension in these Halls, and I am delighted that we have something, I think, we can all pretty much—almost all—agree on. It is a good thing, and it will be good for our country. It is going to be good for Sweden, and it is going to be good for Finland. I think it is going to be good for our planet. Those of us who are privileged to live in what used to be the colony of New Sweden couldn't be happier, and we are delighted to celebrate.

To anybody who is listening who says: Well, you know, I have never been to a national park in Delaware, well, we want you to know that we have one and that it is a great one that runs from one end of the State to the other. If you start up north, get off the train and walk about a mile, you will be at what used to be the home place, the starting place, of the colony of New Sweden.

With that, I think I have done enough damage here today. I yield to

the fellow from Alaska. I don't know if he has spent a lot of time on ships or boats. I spent a few years as a Navy guy, but the marines spend a lot of time at sea. They take rides in our boats. We are on the same team. I usually say we wear different uniforms, but we are on the same team.

And, on this, we are on the same page, and it is great to be here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, it is always good to follow my friend from Delaware, Navy Captain CARPER, who is a Vietnam vet, a naval aviator—the whole works. It is an honor to serve with him on the EPW and other committees. So thank you to my good friend from Delaware.

AMENDMENT NO. 5192

Madam President, I call up my amendment No. 5192 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alaska [Mr. SULLIVAN] proposes an amendment numbered 5192.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide a declaration to the Protocol)

In section 2, strike paragraph (6) and insert the following:

(6) SUPPORT FOR 2014 WALES SUMMIT DEFENSE SPENDING BENCHMARK.—The Senate declares that all NATO members should spend a minimum of 2 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defense and 20 percent of their defense budgets on major equipment, including research and development, by 2024, as outlined in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, after World War II, European leaders looked to the United States to help heal a fractured world and to help provide safety against increasing communist Russian aggression. As Winston Churchill said:

There I sat with the great Russian bear on one side of me with paws outstretched and, on the other side, the great American Buffalo.

Well, the Buffalo prevailed, NATO prevailed, and the world's most successful and enduring military alliance was born.

In 1949, the Senate ratified the NATO treaty by a vote of 82 to 13. President Truman was quoted at the signing ceremony of the NATO treaty by saying:

In this pact, we hope to create a shield against aggression and the fear of aggression . . . For us, war is not inevitable.

He continued:

Men with courage and vision can still determine their own destiny. They can choose slavery or freedom—war or peace. . . . The treaty we are signing here today is evidence of the path they will follow.

That was when President Truman signed the first NATO treaty.

And, indeed, since the formation of NATO, no world wars have broken out, no country that is a signatory of NATO

has been invaded by another country's military forces. In fact, the only time NATO's article V—which is the pillar of the alliance, which states that an attack on one is an attack on all—was invoked was actually after the terrorist attacks on America on 9/11. Our allies came to our help to ensure Afghanistan wouldn't harbor terrorists, and we appreciate that help. We appreciate it deeply from our NATO allies.

NATO, however, is more than just a military alliance. It is a group of countries with shared values and beliefs and a commitment to the principles of democracy. All of this, in addition to the military alliance, is the heritage of NATO.

President Ronald Reagan summed it up succinctly in a speech to our NATO allies in 1983:

What do the Soviets mean by words like democracy, freedom, and peace? Not, I'm sorry to say, what we mean.

Replace the word "Soviet" with "Russia," and the sentiment, unfortunately, holds true today. We see the antithesis of these democratic values and shared beliefs of NATO being played out in real time before us in the streets of Ukraine, where Vladimir Putin is leading a brutal assault on Ukraine—Russia's democratic neighbor—and committing atrocities, horrible atrocities, against the brave people of that country.

As both Presidents Truman and Reagan remarked, members of the NATO alliance are like members of the same house in the same family—the house and the family of democracy.

So, today, the U.S. Senate will welcome the nations of Sweden and Finland into the NATO family. Like any family, we may not agree on everything, but when it is most important, we will have each other's back. That is the essence of NATO and the core reason for its success.

Neither Russia nor any other country will be able to invade Sweden or Finland, now that they have become members of NATO, without its NATO allies coming to their support.

Of course, Finland has experienced the Russian invasion. In 1939, where, without the help from other nations, its greatly outnumbered brave Finnish army fought off over 1 million Russian forces for 3 months. But that won't happen again to Finland. It won't happen to Sweden. They won't be alone now.

We welcome these countries' commitment to freedom and their advanced professional militaries, which will make NATO stronger.

To Finland and Sweden, no longer will you be working with NATO. You will now be working in and part of the greatest defense alliance in history. So welcome to these great countries.

As Churchill once said:

There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them!

I strongly support the inclusion of these two great nations, Sweden and

Finland, into the NATO alliance. Important occasions like this are also an opportunity to reflect on the obligations of membership, not just for these new NATO members but for all NATO members.

And on the heels of the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, the heads of state and representatives of the then-28 member countries who made up NATO attended a very important summit, a NATO summit, in Wales. There, they agreed upon a common goal for all NATO members that they would spend a minimum of 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. This 2 percent of GDP NATO defense spending goal has been strongly supported for decades by American administrations, both Republican and Democratic: Presidents Bush, Obama, Trump, and now President Biden.

At the time, in 2014, of the NATO summit in Wales, 10 of the 28 members of NATO met that 2-percent guideline. Now, 8 years later in 2022, of the 30 NATO country members, we only have 8 of those 30 meeting that 2-percent threshold.

I have a chart here. It lays out the 2-percent goal: who is above it, who is below it. It is many other countries besides the ones that are listed there. But the bottom line is, since Wales and that important commitment, there has not been much progress in NATO on this shared goal and commitment.

Now, I am a very strong supporter of NATO and a very strong supporter of the U.S. military, and I want NATO to endure for decades to come. But alliances can't endure if shared commitments and shared burdens are not met. This is particularly true for democratic alliances like NATO. There must be a sense among the citizens of such countries that all are pulling their weight for the collective defense of the alliance, for the collective defense of each other.

So as I mentioned at the outset, I am calling up an amendment to the resolution. My amendment is to make this commitment clear. It is to announce the U.S. Senate's expectation for all NATO members: the United States, existing members, and now new members—expectations on what has already been agreed to by each NATO country and its citizens.

The amendment is simple. It states the following:

The Senate declares that all NATO members should spend a minimum of 2 percent of their Gross Domestic Product . . . on defense and 20 percent of their defense budget on major equipment, including research and development, by 2024, as outlined in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration.

That is it. It is a simple amendment, and I hope it can pass in the next hour by voice vote.

Let me conclude with this: A robust, expanded NATO with Finland and Sweden as new members is needed now more than ever, especially given the brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

We need to fully understand the broader implications of this invasion. We have entered a new era of authoritarian aggression, led by Russia and China's dictators, who are increasingly isolated and dangerous, driven by historical grievances, paranoid about their democratic neighbors, and willing to use military force and other aggressive actions to crush the citizens of such countries. These dangerous dictators, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, are increasingly working together to achieve their aggressive goals.

We must wake up to the fact that this new era of authoritarian aggression will likely be with us for decades. We need to face it with strategic resolve and confidence. The United States has extraordinary advantages relative to the dictatorships of Russia and China, if we are wise enough to utilize and strengthen them: our global network of allies, our lethal military, our world-class supplies of energy and other natural resources, our dynamic economy, and, most important, our democratic values and commitment to liberty.

Xi Jinping and Putin's biggest weakness and vulnerability is that they fear their own people. We should remember this and exploit this in the months and years ahead. NATO, as an alliance, encompasses so many of these powerful comparative advantages: a lethal military, a global network of allies, dynamic economies, and the power of democratic values and the commitment to liberty.

We should all welcome and celebrate the addition of Finland and Sweden to the NATO alliance, but we should also use this moment to recognize the seriousness of the authoritarian threats on the rise all over the world and recommit ourselves, all NATO members, to our obligations of collective defense, moving forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, first of all, I want to applaud the Senator from Alaska for his comments. I agree completely with his statements, and I think his amendment making it clear that we expect the 2 percent to be honored by all member states is something that we all should welcome and agree to.

I thank you for your leadership. I also thank you for how you have articulated the importance of NATO to our national security.

NATO is a transatlantic security partnership that has served our national security interests so well for so many years since the end of World War II.

Today, we are going to have a chance to vote to expand the NATO alliance by adding Finland and Sweden. I hope all my colleagues will support that.

I will point out that Finland already exceeds the 2 percent that Senator

SULLIVAN is talking about, the percentage of their GDP that they are spending on defense. So I think this is another reason why we have countries that we want to add to the alliance. We have 30 strong now. This will even be stronger with Finland and Sweden being added to the NATO alliance.

But what is unique about the two countries that we will have a chance to vote on in a few moments is that they give us added value to our alliance. They make our alliance stronger. It is in our national security interest to include Finland and Sweden. They add value militarily and economically to this alliance.

The geostrategic location of these two countries is critically important to our national security. Just think for a moment about the threats to the Baltic nations that we have seen by Russia—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Think about where Poland has been threatened because of Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

Adding Finland and Sweden will help us round out the security alliance necessary to provide the security that we need. Both of these countries are already committed to interoperability with the NATO alliance. They are already familiar with how NATO's process and procedures are utilized.

So we have two countries that are ready from day one to be active participants in the alliance. They both participate in regular participation and training exercises with NATO and U.S. forces. Both Sweden and Finland have done that. They have contributed troops. Sweden has contributed troops to NATO-led operations in Kosovo, to Afghanistan, to Iraq. So we have countries that have already stepped up to help us in security and now will be a formal part of the security alliance.

They will add, also, a dimension that is important for us in regards to winter warfare. The cold response winter warfare exercises have been participated in. Finland has the arctic capabilities that will be critically important to us as we move forward. So we are adding value to the NATO alliance as well as expanding the number of countries.

I want to mention one other area: cyber and misinformation. We have two countries that have been very active in being victimized by the misinformation campaign by Russia. Sweden has a Psychological Defence Agency that they created in 2016 that is going to be important for us. As we know, Mr. Putin uses every weapon in his arsenal, including misinformation, in order to try to bring down democratic states. We know that in Sweden's case, they are already taking decisive action to counter the misinformation. Finland has an anti-fake-news initiative, which is actually fascinating. They recognize that Russia is trying to invade their country through misinformation, and they have an active way of defending against it. So, as I said earlier, we have two countries that will add value to the alliance.

The timing here couldn't be better. We have stood up an international resolve to support Ukraine in the invasion by Russia. Expanding NATO at this moment is a clear message to Mr. Putin that we stand with the democratic countries of Europe and we are prepared to expand our NATO alliance to guarantee their protection.

So these two stalwart, democratic nations, Finland and Sweden, have been robust partners to the United States and Europe on countless fronts. They have provided humanitarian aid to many countries in need, including Ukraine during the unprovoked invasion by Russia. Combined, Finland and Sweden provided over \$120 million in military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine between February and June of 2022.

These two nations have also shown a commitment to democratic governance, ranking third and fourth respectively on the global Democracy Index of 2020, according to an economist group. So we have two of the leading democratic states.

Finland and Sweden have proven time and time again that they have the defense capabilities and commitment to democracy in Europe to make them essential NATO allies. The Senate must act now to bolster this global peace and security by voting in favor of Finland and Sweden's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty. I urge my colleagues to do that.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Madam President, I would ask that I be permitted to enter comments about the 1-year anniversary of the fall of Afghanistan, pointing out that the Biden administration has been able to assist in the evacuation of so many American citizens and people who helped our U.S. mission, those who were involved in the democratic reforms in that country, but there is still a mission that we need to participate in to save people.

So I would ask unanimous consent that those comments be printed in a separate part of the RECORD.

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

Mr. CARDIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be permitted to speak prior to the scheduled votes: Senator COLLINS for up to 10 minutes, Senator GRAHAM for up to 5 minutes, Senator BLUNT for up to 5 minutes, Senator ROMNEY for up to 5 minutes, Senator RISCH for up to 5 minutes, Senator PAUL for up to 10 minutes, Senator SULLIVAN for up to 1 minute, and Senator MENEZDEZ for up to 10 minutes.

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

#### NATO

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I rise in strong support of the accession of Finland and Sweden into the NATO alliance.

In May, I visited Helsinki and Stockholm as part of a Senate delegation to

encourage the Finnish and Swedish efforts to join the alliance. Our trip, however, started in Ukraine. There, after a long, secret journey under cover of darkness, our contingent of four Senators met with President Zelenskyy for 2 hours. We discussed the military, humanitarian, economic, and security consequences of Russia's unprovoked, brutal war against Ukraine. I asked President Zelenskyy whether he thought Vladimir Putin's attack on his country had had the opposite effect of what he had intended. For example, the Russian-speaking sections of eastern Ukraine are now embracing their Ukrainian identity, and NATO is more united than ever. President Zelenskyy told me that Putin's war of aggression not only had been the opposite of the easy conquest that Putin had expected but also had strengthened the NATO alliance and the European Union.

(Mr. HICKENLOOPER assumed the Chair.)

Mr. President, one cannot understand how Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upended decades and, in the case of Sweden, centuries of security policy for these countries. For 200 years, Sweden has maintained a policy of neutrality, but, as Swedish Prime Minister Andersson put it to me, "February 24 changed everything." That was the date of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Finland, which shares an 830-mile border with Russia, likewise concluded that Russia's aggression required a dramatic rethinking of its security. To demonstrate the reality on the ground, the Finnish President took us outside of his home and pointed to his right, where Tallinn, Estonia, is only 50 miles away across the Baltic Sea. He then pointed to his left and told us that St. Petersburg, Russia, is only 200 miles away.

Our visits to these leaders came just as the Parliaments of Finland and Sweden were voting to formally request admission into NATO. We assured their leaders that there was strong, bipartisan support in the Senate for their accession and that adding their capabilities to the alliance would improve, would strengthen our collective defense and security.

This is, indeed, an important point. Sweden and Finland will both bring enormous geographic advantages and military capabilities to NATO. Finland is expected to exceed NATO's 2 percent defense spending target this year, and Sweden has committed to meeting that target as soon as possible. Finland has the largest reserve military force in Europe and has recently decided to upgrade its current fleet of American F-18 fighter jets with the fifth-generation F-35. For the past several years, Sweden has been increasing its arms spending, and the country has advanced defense industrial capabilities.

The addition of both of these nations to NATO will bolster deterrence against Russia in the Arctic, Nordic, and Baltic regions.