

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

February 25, 2024

Dear Colleague:

This legislative session, the Congress will confront critical challenges to our nation's economic and national security. Senate Democrats' recent work alongside serious-minded Senate Republicans to pass the bipartisan national security supplemental in the Senate should be a model for our work ahead. The fact is when Democrats and Republicans embrace compromise and cooperation, the Congress can invest in the American people, avoid an extreme Republican government shutdown, and fulfil our shared responsibility to protect our national security both at home and abroad.

As we return this week, we will once again face the specter of a harmful and unnecessary government shutdown caused by an extreme wing within the Republican Party. Appropriations Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, and our staff are having intense discussions with Speaker Johnson and his team, alongside Leader Jeffries and Leader McConnell. Democrats have made clear a shutdown would significantly hurt Americans, disrupt supply chains, hamper small businesses, upend services for our military and veterans, jeopardize health care for children and families, and much, much more. This is not academic. We are mere days away from a partial government shutdown on March 1. Unless Republicans get serious, the extreme Republican shutdown will endanger our economy, raise costs, lower safety, and exact untold pain on the American people. For example:

- A shutdown of the Agriculture Department would threaten vital food support programs for women and children and block critical loans to American farmers, threatening increased food prices for all Americans.
- A shutdown of the Veterans Administration would mean the closure of veteran outreach offices and the shuttering of critical veteran support programs for our nation's heroes.
- A shutdown of the Housing Department would leave American families high and dry without key federal housing loan support, potentially causing rent and housing prices to spike.
- A shutdown of the Transportation Department would risk travel delays and travelers' safety by freezing the hiring and training of air traffic controllers and halting ongoing investigations.

Unfortunately, extreme House Republicans have shown they're more capable of causing chaos than passing legislation. It is my sincere hope that in the face of a disruptive shutdown that would hurt our economy and make American families less safe, Speaker Johnson will step up to once again buck the extremists in his caucus and do the right thing. While we had hoped to have legislation ready this weekend that would give ample time for members to review the text, it is clear now that House Republicans need more time to sort themselves out. With the uncertainty of how the House will pass the appropriations bills and avoid a shutdown this week, I ask all Senators to keep their schedules flexible, so we can work to ensure a pointless and harmful lapse in funding doesn't occur.

Another important challenge that has been held up by the dysfunctional House Republican conference is the bipartisan Senate-passed national security supplemental. Yesterday, I returned from leading a CODEL to Ukraine to meet with President Zelenskyy and mark 2 years since Russia's illegal and deadly invasion. It was a powerful and important trip where I was once again struck by the Ukrainian people's strength, resolve, and commitment to defending their country. President Zelenskyy once again did not mince words: without the assistance from the US that the Senate passed in the national security supplemental, Putin will win.

This trip came at an inflection point for America and a turning point for democracy around the world. Our delegation told President Zelenskyy that America stands with Ukraine, and we will not stop fighting to get the funding his country so desperately needs and deserves. And we were clear in our message to Europe that, despite troubling opposition from some extreme corners of the Republican Party, the US is steadfast in its commitment to the NATO alliance and our European allies.

While in Ukraine, we learned in granular detail about the armaments Ukrainian troops need in order to fight back Russian forces and the specific advantages Russia would gain if the arms are not delivered. We visited a cemetery where brave Ukrainian men and women have been buried and where others will inevitably lie if Ukraine doesn't get the aid they need. We were told in no uncertain terms that if more weaponry had been available in Avdiivka, the outcome would have been different.

I know our caucus recognizes that if we abandon Ukraine, the political, diplomatic, economic, and military consequences will reverberate for years, not only for Ukraine and Europe, but for the American people. The death of Russia's brave opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, shows the danger and menace of Putin's autocracy.

Congress has a chance, right now, to ensure Putin is not victorious. The bipartisan national security supplemental currently sits at the feet of Speaker Johnson. I call on the Speaker to go to Ukraine and witness what we witnessed, because I believe it is virtually impossible for anyone with decency and goodwill to turn their back on Ukraine if they saw the horrors of that war with their own eyes. If Speaker Johnson put the national security supplemental on the floor today, it would pass with a large number of both Democrats and Republicans. Now is the time for action. Speaker Johnson cannot let politics or blind obeisance to Donald Trump get in the way. And I look forward to conveying President Zelenskyy's message directly to Speaker Johnson and any member of Congress who has doubts about the need for aid or the threat of Putin.

We have so many pressing issues ahead of us this Congress, and with Donald Trump still calling the shots for many in the Republican party, these important tasks will not be easy to accomplish. We all know how high the stakes are when it comes to funding our government, preserving democracy, and standing up to brutal dictators. And we know that when it comes to Ukraine, Putin is closely watching and cheering on the dysfunction in Congress. Ukrainians are a valiant and strong people, and I know our caucus is united in our support for their cause. It is my deep hope that Speaker Johnson recognizes the weight of history is on his shoulders, and he shuts out the political and self-motivated demands of Donald Trump and rises to the occasion to meet the moment.

I am hopeful that pragmatic Republicans will engage in responsible governing by working with Democrats on government funding and the bipartisan national security supplemental

and standing up to the extreme wing of the Republican Party. If Republican leadership succumbs to the demands of the hard-right wing of their party, it will be very detrimental to the American people and democracy around the globe.

I look forward to seeing you all this week and continuing our work for the American people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator