

Governor Phil Scott
Freedom & Unity Vigil in Solidarity with the People of Ukraine
Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Transcript:

Good evening. Thank you all for being here tonight, where we stand united with the people of Ukraine – for their democracy and their independence.

I know the weather may not be ideal for an outdoor event but as a reminder, it is about the same temperature in Ukraine and many are without power, heat or a roof over their head.

For two and a half weeks, we have all watched in horror as Putin's Russia ruthlessly attacks a neighbor who wanted peace, not war. Thousands of Ukrainian patriots, and civilians, including women and children, have already lost their lives. Millions have had to leave their homes, their belongings, and their way of life to protect their families. We've watched a maternity hospital and other civilian targets attacked by the Russians and their mercenaries.

And we are seeing, in real time, the unfortunate reality that this is a very real, very serious threat to a democracy, and – as has been said before – a threat to democracies anywhere, is a threat to democracy everywhere.

At the same time, we have seen inspiring acts of courage, selflessness and resolve from the people of Ukraine – from everyday citizens, all the way up to the country's leaders.

It is truly a "David vs. Goliath" moment. We are seeing soldiers defend their country against an army five times its size with only a tenth the number of aircraft. Civilians taking up arms for the first time in their lives to slow and hopefully fend off this unprovoked invasion. And we have watched the heartbreak footage of parents leaving their children to fight for freedom. Hearing one dad talk about his seven-month-old daughter, Diana, saying, "It was a difficult choice. But better that she be without a father, than without a future." Think about that for a moment and let it sink in.

While Putin may have a larger army, it is clear Ukraine and its people have the courage, heart and will to persevere. And they have the power of the truth and the moral high ground on their side.

And that's why the rest of us in the Free World need to have their back.

Though our state is small, our commitment to freedom, and to those who fight for it, is enormous.

We are here today to send a message to the people of Ukraine and to the tyrant in Russia: We stand united with Ukraine, for its freedom, and with its people.

As I have said, I know there is little our small state can do to change the outcome of what happens over 4,000 miles away. But we have a moral obligation to do what we can.

Ukraine is a peaceful nation, a young democracy, working hard – now harder than any of us can know – for the future of its people.

These are parents and grandparents, college students and school children, who just a few weeks ago were going about their day the same way many of us would: Going to work, seeing their friends at school, shopping at the grocery store, walking their dogs or riding a bike through the park. They are just like us.

And now, many have been torn from their homes; they are taking shelter in subway stations, fearful for their lives and their future.

So, the fact is, Ukraine's fight to protect their people, their rights, and their land, and what that means for democracies across the globe, is too important for us to sit out.

We must do our part.

That's why I am so pleased to be here this evening to share this message of support and to sign a bill that will contribute over \$640,000, which represents \$1 from every Vermonter to help the people of Ukraine.

It was important to me that this money go to an organization we know can make a difference. So, we'll be donating these funds to Save the Children, a global humanitarian aid organization with boots on the ground and the expertise to do just that – save kids. And we'll hear from this organization in a few minutes.

Again, I know this is a small gesture, but it is not something we have done before, and we hope it will inspire others to take similar steps. Because if states were to unite around this common cause, together, we could make a real difference.

I want to thank Lt. Governor Gray, Speaker Krowinski, Senator Balint, minority and majority leaders in both chambers, and all state legislators for acting on my request so quickly and passing this important bill with the urgency it deserved.

I also want to thank Treasurer Pearce, Attorney General Donavan, and Secretary of State Condos for being here tonight.

I know Senators Leahy and Sanders, and Congressman Welch wanted to be here as well, but unfortunately could not attend. I thank them for the work they are doing to support Ukraine.

Once again, Vermont has shown that in times of need, we will step up, together – regardless of party. Because while we may disagree on policy and politics, at our core, we share a commitment to fundamental rights.

I am grateful to see all of you here tonight, so we can stand united and send this message to the brave people of Ukraine:

You are not alone in your fight; you have support across the globe. And we will continue to do what we can to help.

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