

Dr. Burgess Weekly Video Address March 6, 2014 “Reasserting American Leadership”

Hello this is your congressman, Michael Burgess. Earlier this week, Secretary of State John Kerry met in Paris with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and other European leaders to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Ukraine. Unfortunately, those meetings did not include one between Lavrov and his Ukrainian counterpart.

According to the Associated Press, the Ukrainian foreign minister said he hoped to brief Lavrov on a Ukrainian plan to offer Crimea more autonomy while still claiming it within Russia's borders. He stressed that the Ukraine would use all peaceful means, and it wants to avoid war with Russia. Still, leaders in Moscow have refused to recognize Ukraine's new leaders, much less sit down with them. A meeting between the two nations must occur to ensure a peaceful solution.

As the crisis continues to evolve, we have been met with virtual silence on this issue from President Obama. However, it is precisely because of the President's inaction on international matters that has emboldened President Putin enough to take such radical action. Recently “red lines” and ultimatums followed-up with non-action by the Obama Administration, and it set a precedent that bad actors can operate with impunity.

Four years ago, the-Secretary Hillary Clinton we must hit the reset button on our relationship with President Putin. This sent a terrible message to the rest of the world. It implied that the United States, which has always stood for freedom and democracy, is willing to work diplomatically with President Putin. But President Putin is not to be trusted and he's still fighting the Cold War and denies basic freedoms to the people of Russia.

Indeed, the world is looking to America for leadership. They are looking to President Obama to act. Instead, they are getting nothing in return. Rather than empty promises, we need to reassert American leadership.

Here in the House, we're doing our part to make that happen. Yesterday, I voted in support of a bill that would allow loan guarantees for the Ukraine. The House Foreign Affairs Committee also introduced a separate non-binding resolution that would urge the Treasury Department to impose economic sanctions on Russia, such as targeting Russian individuals and banks.

Just yesterday, I signed on to a bill that would grant all pending natural gas export applications without delay, regardless of whether or not the country they are going to has Free Trade Agreements. Measures like these that would expand the United States' global impact in the energy sector is another step closer to lessening President Putin's influence. The House is committed in taking steps to reassert American leadership and make sure that Russia's recent, deplorable actions are not met with just hallow rhetoric.

I am hopeful that these measures will send a strong message from the United States that Russia's actions cannot stand. As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments on this issue. Thank you for taking the time to listen. May God bless you and your family, and as always, may God bless Texas.

