band of cronies are not going to stop. But in his monomaniacal hubris, Putin has severely—severely—underestimated the Ukrainian people. Every time an innocent Ukrainian is killed, the resolve of the people grows stronger, and we stand with them. I join my colleagues in one voice to say this: ''Slava Ukraini,'' glory to Ukraine.

And, Mr. President, just seeing the video that the President showed us is heartbreaking and strengthens our resolve. Putin, by being such a villain, by being such a brutal, evil man, is not going to deter the Ukrainians, for sure, and not the American people from helping Ukraine. It strengthens our resolve when we see how vicious, how brutal he is.

COSTS

Mr. President, now, on another issue, this morning I want to highlight two steps Senate Democrats are taking to maintain our laser focus on lowering costs for American families.

First, today the Senate Finance Committee is holding a hearing examining one of the most vexing issues facing Americans everywhere: the alarming rise in prescription drug costs. Few things are as frustrating and debilitating as going to the pharmacy and seeing the price on your receipt go up and up and up for essential medications.

For families struggling to make ends meet, drug costs present a harrowing Sophie's choice. Do I buy groceries and diapers and take care of my kids, or do I pay for my medications? It is a decision no American should make, but millions have to make it every day.

Insulin is a particularly flummoxing example. According to some sources, a 40-day supply can now climb north of $600 a month. For millions of Americans who rely on insulin to manage their diabetes, this is a crisis that should compel the Senate to act. I expect that we will consider next steps soon on proposals already presented to my colleagues.

And besides rising prescription drug costs, Senate Democrats are zeroing in on the alarming state of energy prices. In the coming weeks, I expect that Congress will be calling on CEOs from the oil and gas companies to testify on the alarming spike in energy prices.

Over the past few weeks, as war in Ukraine began, the price of a barrel of oil rose precipitously. That immediately translated to oil and gas companies raising the price for Americans at the pump. But something is happening that Americans shouldn't overlook. Over the past few days, oil prices have actually been decreasing, but the price of gas at the pump has not.

Some of the economists call this stickiness. When the costs go up, the price to the consumer goes up; when the costs go down, the price to the consumer stays high. Stickiness does not come close to describing the outrage that Americans feel about this.

The last time that the price of a barrel of oil was at $96, gas was $3.62 a gallon. Oil prices have now come down to $96 again. Yet the price of gas continues to rise. It is now at $4.31. The bewildering incongruity between falling oil prices and rising gas prices smacks of price-gouging and is deeply damaging to working Americans.

The Senate is going to get answers, and that is why we will be calling on the CEOs of major oil companies to come testify before the Congress.

Meanwhile, as Americans pay more at the pump, the biggest oil companies in America are making a killing. Twenty-five of the top oil and gas companies reported a combined $205 billion in profits. That is an astounding figure, blowing prepandemic figures out of the water. But instead of lowering gas prices, oil companies are using these soaring profits to reward their shareholders through stock buybacks. It is outrageous to me. Stock buybacks—they benefit the CEOs because they can tell the shareholders, ''See, the price went up.'' But it is not because they sold more product, became more efficient, hired more workers, used productivity. It is simply decreasing the number of shares so the price goes up. That, to me, is so wrong. It is one of the disturbing signs of American capitalism.

These disturbing trends demand answers, and the CEOs of large oil and gas companies should be advised they will have to provide answers before the Senate very soon: Why stock buybacks instead of lowering prices or increasing productivity or moving to green energy, which we know we all have to do?

And finally, in conclusion, another issue on prices. The Senate will also take action on the bottlenecks and supply chain crisis crippling our shipping lines. Senator CANTWELL and the Commerce Committee will be holding a markup on March 22 on bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators KLOBUCHAR and THUNE that will target this issue—one of the many, many ways that Democrats are continuing our focus on lowering costs for American families.

So these are some concrete steps we are taking. We are going to hear about many more as Democrats focus keenly—laser-like—on the higher costs for the American people, which we know must, must come down.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

UKRAINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, Members of Congress received an update on the situation in Ukraine directly from President Zelenskyy. His presentation was powerful and heartwrenching. It reinforced our sympathy, our outrage, and our resolve.

President Zelenskyy's courage and leadership have earned the attention and the admiration of the entire free world. He has marshaled Ukraine's brave and defiant resistance against Russian invasion. He has steeled the resolve of his people beyond what anybody expected and offered the entire world a master class in leadership.

This morning, President Zelenskyy didn't mince words about what Ukraine needs urgently to keep up the fight: more lethal capabilities and heavier sanctions against Russia and especially the air defense systems that we should have helped Ukraine get weeks ago. His people face a long and difficult road ahead, and the entire world knows what they are up against.

The scale of Russia's aggression wasn't just foreseeable; it was foreseen. For 30 years, every step toward democracy and sovereignty in Eastern Europe has tempted the wrath of revanchist autocrats like Putin. That is why I have asked the Biden administration early and often to demonstrate America's commitment to our allies and partners most squarely in Russia's crosshairs.

Last June, 8 months before the Russian invasion, I urged the President to ''provide serious, lethal support to Ukraine and other vulnerable states on the front lines of Putin's aggressions''—8 months ago. In December, I specifically called on President Biden to deploy extra U.S. forces to reinforce NATO's eastern flank—last December. I urged his administration to expedite and expand shipments of lethal aid like anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. But, as we know, a security assistance package for Ukraine sat down at the White House for months before being approved. Once approved, efforts to transfer the weapons moved at the speed of bureaucracy. And the President waited until February to order U.S. personnel to the frontlines.

The Biden administration had over a year to get this right. They had a year to translate rhetorical support for NATO into leading real, collective defense. But they took 5 months to even nominate an ambassador to the alliance.

On the campaign trail, President Biden called Putin a ''KGB thug.'' He was right about that. But after 1 week in office, he announced an agreement with the Kremlin to extend the New START treaty for up to 5 years, reducing our leverage to get a better deal that caps Putin's nuclear ambitions.

As the threats to Ukraine gathered, whenever an opportunity to act has presented itself, the Biden administration has hesitated until political pressure became overwhelming or balked outright.

Since Russia's invasion began, the administration has publicly shot down efforts from a NATO ally to get working aircraft to Ukrainian pilots. Last