# Tim Walz on Russia and Ukraine

Congress to take up his post as the governor of Minnesota.

**"** August 20, 2024

**▲ RM Staff** 

Since Kamala Harris chose Tim Walz as her running mate on Aug. 6, the U.S. press has published dozens of news stories on what qualities make the Minnesota governor most appealing to American voters concerned with domestic issues. Significantly less, however, could be found in American media on Walz's record and views on foreign policy issues in general, and U.S. policies in the post-Soviet space in particular. This RM compilation is meant to remedy that lack, detailing Walz's views on this region, as expressed since first serving as a member the U.S. House of Representatives, and later as the governor of Minnesota. The compilation also details what bills and edicts related to post-Soviet Eurasia he co-sponsored and signed while a Congressman and a governor, respectively.

Born on April 6, 1964, in Nebraska, Walz grew up there before enlisting in the U.S. Army National Guard at 17. In 1989, he graduated from Chadron State College, after which he spent a year teaching, and then served full-time as an Army National Guardsman. He then became a high school teacher and football coach. In February 2005, he submitted documents to represent Minnesota's 1<sup>st</sup> District in the U.S. House of Representatives, before retiring from the National Guard in May of that year after 24 total years of service. Walz won that election and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2007–2019. While still in Congress, he ran for governor of Minnesota in 2018, won, and was reelected in 2022.

The first evidence of Walz's public support for Ukraine in its interaction with Russia dates back to his first term in the U.S House of Representatives. In September 2008, Walz co-sponsored H.Res.1314: "Remembering the 75th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine (Holodomor) of 1932–1933." Walz then repeatedly acted in support of Ukraine in his subsequent years in Congress. For instance, in 2015, he co-sponsored a bill to authorize assistance and sustenance to

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February of 2022, the governor instantly condemned the attack as "unprovoked," adding "It's time to unite, protect democracy and work together to hold Russia accountable." In 2022, Walz also issued an executive order to compel Minnesota state agencies to terminate any contracts with Russian entities over Russia's war against Ukraine.

In 2023, Walz met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, saying it was "an honor" to speak with the Ukrainian president and to

in either Ukraine or in Russia. Just this month, Walz has been praised by Oleksandr Merezhko, Ukrainian foreign affairs

chairman, who described Walz as "very pro-Ukrainian and our press and our people, they view him as a friend, as a

the military and national security forces of Ukraine. He remained supportive of the Ukrainian course upon leaving

promise Minnesota's "unwavering support." Speaking on the two-year anniversary of the invasion in February 2024, Walz declared that Minnesota supports Ukraine as it fights "to defend freedom and democracy." That same month, Walz signed an agricultural deal between his state of Minnesota and the north Ukrainian region of Chernihiv, saying "It's a really important showing of friendship and a real important showing of ties." It's worth adding that Walz's long support for Ukraine, and his repeated criticisms of Russia, have not gone unnoticed

true friend of Ukraine," and the Kyiv Independent described Walz as an outspoken Ukraine supporter. And in comments given to European Pravda, a Ukrainian online newspaper, Ukraine's Ambassador to the U.S. Oksana Markarova praised Walz's record on Ukraine. "Governor Walz is definitely one of the leaders of such support and a reliable friend of our country," Markarova said. His long record of support for Ukraine in Congress and as Minnesota's governor also landed him a spot on a list of 77 newly sanctioned U.S. nationals unveiled by the Russian Foreign Ministry in February 2023, and which bans these individuals from travelling to Russia for being involved in arms supplies from the U.S. to Ukraine. What emerges from a review of Walz's foreign policy views and votes in Congress and as governor is that like his running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris, Walz believes that Ukraine deserves support for aspiring to develop as a democracy under the shadow of a predatory Russia. Like most American foreign policy thinkers of the post-WWII

generation, he also shares the American view that economic growth and trade go hand-in-hand with healthy democratic governance. This explains the consistency of his positions on U.S. trade and security assistance with Ukraine. In addition to being staunchly pro-Ukrainian in the conflict between Kyiv and Moscow, Walz has also once confessed that concerns related to Russia and nuclear security keep him awake at night and called for lifting Moscow's restrictions on exports of American dairy products to Russia. Walz also co-sponsored the International Human Rights

Defense Act of 2018, which established in the Department of State a permanent Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI individuals, a move that could not have possibly pleased Vladimir Putin—who seeks to portray himself as an international defender of traditional values. The compilation of Walz's views on various issues, which you can find below, is part of Russia Matters' "Competing Views" rubric, where we share prominent American figures' takes on issues pertaining to Russia, U.S.-Russian relations and broader U.S. policies affecting Russia. All sections may be updated with new or past statements. The quotes below are divided into categories similar to those in Russia Matters' news and analysis digests; reflecting the most pertinent

topic areas for U.S.-Russian relations broadly, and for the drivers of the two countries' policies toward one another.

#### Nuclear security and safety: • Asked during a 2010 Star Tribute Editorial Board endorsement interview to identify a global threat that kept him up at

I. U.S. and Russian priorities for the bilateral agenda

Text that is not italicized or in brackets is a direct quote from Walz.

night, U.S. Rep. *Tim Walz* pointed to Russia and nuclear security. (Star-Tribune, 03.24.14) North Korea's nuclear and missile programs:

No significant statements could be found.

Iran and its nuclear program:

No significant statements could be found.

Humanitarian impact of the Ukraine conflict:

03.07.22)

• When a sovereign nation is threatened, each and every one of us stands up, fights back and does right by humanity and peace in this world ... We cannot stand idly by; we all must do our parts [to help Ukraine]. (AP,

• [When inking an agricultural deal between Minnesota and the north Ukrainian region of Chernihiv:] It's a really important showing of friendship and a real important showing of ties. (Al Jazeera, 08.07.24)

• [During a virtual meeting with Zelenskyy in 2024:] It was an honor to hear from President Zelenskyy firsthand and offer him our unwavering support. (Al Jazeera, 08.07.24)

• We stand with Ukraine and condemn Russia for these unprovoked and unlawful attacks. (Office of Gov. Tim Walz, 02.25.22)

of Ukraine. (Congress' official web site, 02.12.15)

Military and security aspects of the Ukraine conflict and their impacts:

• Walz co-sponsored H.R.955 that was to authorize assistance and sustainment to the military and national security forces

Military aid to Ukraine:

- Walz voted in support of H.Res 162, "Calling on the President to provide Ukraine with military assistance to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity." (GovTrack.us, 03.23.15) • We stand ready to support the federal government in guiding our nation through this violent time, and I am
- committed to standing together with leaders at all levels of government, regardless of political party, to work towards peace. It's time to unite, protect democracy, and work together to end this violence and hold Russia accountable. (Office of Gov. Tim Walz, 02.25.22)
- Punitive measures related to Russia's war against Ukraine and their impact globally: • [When signing Chapter 43, HF 4165 into law to condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine in his capacity as a governor:] Today, I was proud to sign this bipartisan bill into law to help ensure that our state does not aid the
- Russian government's illegal aggression against Ukraine ... Ukrainians are our friends, family and neighbors and we continue to stand firmly with our Ukrainian community here in Minnesota and abroad. (Gov. Walz's official site, 04.01.22)
- [When issuing Executive Order 22-03 in March 2022, directing more than two dozen Minnesota state agencies to terminate any contracts with Russian entities:] Minnesota stands firmly with Ukraine and strongly condemns the Russian government's actions....I encourage other individuals, companies and organizations to stand with their Ukrainian neighbors and end support to Russian entities. (Star-Tribune, 08.05.22)
- Ukraine-related negotiations: No significant statements could be found.
- Great Power rivalry/new Cold War/NATO-Russia relations:
- No significant statements could be found. China-Russia: Allied or aligned?

# • No significant statements could be found.

Missile defense:

 No significant statements could be found. Nuclear arms:

 No significant statements could be found. Counterterrorism:

 No significant statements could be found. Conflict in Syria:

#### • The Assad Regime, which is backed by Putin's Russia, committed an unconscionable war crime against the Syrian people when it carried out a chemical attack killing innocent men, women and children. I condemn Assad's use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms... Assad must be brought to justice, but we cannot enter into another perpetual war. If we are to take further military action in Syria, we owe it to our brave service members to provide them a clear directive, an unquestionable path to victory and a coalition of allied forces to fight by their

Cyber security/AI: No significant statements could be found. Elections interference:

• [A statement released by Congressman Walz following reports of communication between the White House and

the FBI concerning potential Russian ties to U.S. political operatives during the 2016 election:] The fact that any

communication whatsoever took place between the White House and the FBI on the pending investigation in

Russia attack on our electoral system, including but not limited to any potential ties between U.S. political

operatives and Russian intelligence agents. We must get to the facts to restore faith in our democracy. The

American people deserve to know the truth. (Congressional Documents and Publications, 02.24.17)

question is further grounds for the necessity of an independent, nonpartisan commission to investigate the Putin-

side. (Congressional Documents and Publications, Twin Cities Pioneer Press, 04.07.17)

• At the very least, it appears [Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Devin] Nunes' ability to independently investigate Russia's attack on our democracy is compromised. As the credibility of any congressional investigation relies on a commitment to bipartisanship and the independence of those conducting it, I call on Chairman Nunes to immediately recuse himself. (Congressional Documents and Publications 03.31.17)

• Walz co-sponsored H.Con.Res.47: Expressing the sense of Congress that until the conclusion of the FBI's criminal and

Administration is acting under a "gray cloud" of the appearance of a conflict of interest, and, as such, should refrain

counterintelligence investigations into the nature of the Russian connection to the Trump campaign, the Trump

from taking any actions or making any changes to United States policy that could be seen as benefitting President Putin or his inner circle. (Congress.gov, 04.05.17) • Former FBI Director James Comey's testimony today raises serious questions and concerns about the President's actions and what appears to be his attempt to personally influence the investigation into the Russian attack on our 2016 election. I am deeply alarmed that President Trump seems to be more concerned about clearing his own

or partisan issue. It's an American issue. The American people need and deserve the whole truth. We need to

name than on preventing future attacks on our democracy. Russia's attack on our electoral process isn't a political

establish an independent commission immediately. (Congressional Documents and Publications, 06.08.17) Energy exports: No significant statements could be found. Climate change:

# No significant statements could be found.

- U.S.-Russian economic ties: • [A letter to U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Ron Kirk and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack urging them to make full use of all of the World Trade Organization's tools to address issues that have continued to
- prohibit U.S. dairy exports from having fair access to the Russian market:] When [the bill] is signed into law and the U.S. permanently grants Russia normal trade relations, the United States will be able to use the WTO's mechanisms to address Russia's non-science based sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to American dairy exports. We strongly urge you to consider using the WTO's mechanisms to reopen these markets and ensure that
- market. (Office of Rep. Ron Kind, 10.20.12) • Walz voted against a House resolution authorizing the extension of non-discriminatory trade relations with the Russian Federation. (GovTrack.us, 11.15.12) • Walz voted to support a bill prohibiting the Department of Defense from purchasing equipment from Russian arms dealer Rosoboronexport unless it could be shown that the firm was cooperating with a U.S. defense contractor. (GovTrack.us, 06.14.13) U.S.-Russian relations in general:

American dairy producers and processors have the opportunity to compete on a level playing field in the Russian

- Walz voted to support H.R.6156, better known as the Magnitsky Act, which was intended to punish Russian officials responsible for the death of Russian tax accountant Sergei Magnitsky in a Moscow prison in 2009. (GovTrack.us, 11.16.12) • Walz co-sponsored the International Human Rights Defense Act of 2018 which established in the Department of State a
- *individuals.* (Congress.gov, 06.07.18)

permanent Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex)

### II. Russia's domestic policies Domestic politics, economy and energy: • Don't associate citizens [such as Russians] with their governments in many cases. (Star-Tribune, 08.05.22)

- Defense and aerospace: • No significant statements could be found.
- III. Russia's relations with other countries Russia's general foreign policy and relations with "far abroad" countries:

Security, law-enforcement and justice:

• No significant statements could be found.

## No significant statements could be found. Ukraine:

• Walz co-sponsored H.Res.1314: "Remembering the 75th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine (Holodomor) of 1932-1933 and extending the deepest sympathies of the House of Representative to the victims, survivors, and families of this tragedy, and for other purposes." (Congress.gov, 09.23.08) [An estimated 3–5 million Ukrainians lost their lives due to

determine their future." (GovTrack.us, 10.20.15)

consequence of Soviet policy.]

- their right to choose their own future free of intimidation and fear." (GovTrack.us, 02.10.14) • Walz voted to support H.R. 4152, "Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014" and H.R. 4278, the "Ukraine Support Act." (GovTrack.us, 03.06.14, GovTrack.us, 03.27.14)
- Walz declined to vote for or against H.R. 1997, "Ukraine Cybersecurity Cooperation Act of 2017." (GovTrack.us, 02.07.18) • I'm proud to declare today as Ukrainian Solidarity Day in Minnesota ...We stand with our Ukrainian community here in Minnesota and abroad as the brave and resilient people of Ukraine continue to defend freedom and

• Walz voted to support H.Res 348, "Supporting the right of the people of Ukraine to freely elect their government and

- democracy against this unlawful, unprovoked Russian invasion. (Office of Gov. Tim Walz, 03.06.22) • To our Ukrainian Minnesota communities, you are woven into the fabric of this state. Without Ukrainian Minnesotans there is no Minnesota, and today, we are all Ukrainians. (AP, 03.07.22)
- people of Ukraine. (Walz's X account, 02.24.23) • This week, I visited the Ukrainian Embassy to reaffirm our ongoing commitment to Ukraine. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Minnesota stands with the people of Ukraine as they fight to defend freedom and democracy.
- Other post-Soviet republics: • One of Walz's first votes as a Congressman was to table a motion to reconsider H.Res.1166, "Expressing the sense of the

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(Walz's X account, 02.24.24)

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starvation during the Soviet Union's first forced collectivization campaigns. Russia does not recognize this famine as a • Walz voted in support of H.Res 447, "Supporting the democratic and European aspirations of the people of Ukraine, and

• One year ago, Russia attacked Ukraine—an independent, sovereign, and democratic state. And as long Ukraine must defend freedom against tyranny, Minnesota will continue to stand with our Ukrainian community and the

House of Representatives regarding provocative and dangerous statements and actions taken by the Government of the

Russian Federation that undermine the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia." (Congress.gov, 05.07.08) [Walz was one of the two-thirds 'aye' votes needed for the special resolution to stand.] Photo by Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan available in the public domain.

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