

U.S. Aid Bill Aims to Free Ukraine From Russian Energy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

June 06, 2014



A worker turns a valve at an underground gas storage facility near Striy, Ukraine.

A bill introduced by U.S. Senator Edward Markey on Thursday aims to ease Ukraine's fuel dependence on Russia by modernizing its heating infrastructure and updating its Soviet-era natural gas drilling capabilities.

Some U.S. lawmakers have called for a surge in U.S. fuel exports to help Ukraine wean itself from Russian energy supplies after President Vladimir Putin's invasion and annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

But U.S. shipments of liquefied natural gas to global markets are not expected to begin until 2015, and Ukraine lacks a port to receive the imports. In addition, U.S. oil companies are held back by a 40-year domestic ban on crude exports.

Markey's bill would double the amount of resources U.S. agencies, including the State

Department, USAID, and the Export-Import Bank, are providing to update Ukraine's energy system. USAID would be authorized, for example, to appropriate \$10 million a year for Ukraine from 2015 to 2017.

The Ukrainian Independence from Russian Energy Act "will give kilowatts to Kiev, not more profits to Putin's pals," said Markey, who chairs a Senate foreign relations panel that handles international energy issues. Putin has close ties to several executives in Russian energy companies.

Ukraine's energy system is notoriously inefficient. The World Bank has estimated that Ukraine could cut the amount of natural gas it uses for heating in half by plugging gaps, replacing old boilers, and fixing leaky pipelines.

Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts, is looking for co-sponsors for the bill, which he introduced during a hearing on Ukraine. Even if the measure passed in the Democratic-led Senate, it would face an uncertain future in the Republican-led House of Representatives.

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