

# Supervisor Brian Kulpa's March 2022 Column



Like all of you I have been following the horrific news from Ukraine closely with a heavy heart. The devastation can leave us feeling helpless. I know as a father, I am lacking the answers I wish I had for my children's questions. As a community leader, I am encouraged by the show of support I see around me. I know we are all looking at what we can do from our small corner of the world to help. Since the invasion began, we see signs of unity and support all around us, locally, nationally and globally.

With so much fear surrounding these attacks, it is important that we remain united and share one strong voice that we condemn the actions of the Russian government. The loss of innocent lives is reprehensible. Although the attacks are happening 4,800 miles away, the connection to the situation is very strong here. I recently saw a news report that 40 percent of the more than 1,000 people from Ukraine that live in Western New York call Amherst/Williamsville their home. We lend our full support to Ukraine-Americans. I know being here and seeing what is happening in their home country is devastating. Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced and won't have a home to return to. I support Gov. Hochul in her announcement that New York State is prepared to accept and support Ukrainian refugees. Western New York and Amherst especially has always been welcoming to refugees.

During these difficult times we are reminded of the freedoms that we enjoy day in and day out. We develop an even stronger appreciation for the freedom of speech we have. We see more than ever the importance of our elections and the right and ability to vote. A world away, we are not only seeing Ukraine devastated, but we are seeing the Russian citizens who do not support the invasion arrested for protesting.

Here at home, we have the right to speak against our government's decisions without fear of imprisonment. We have the right to protest peacefully. We can write letters and op-eds that express our point of view and oppose decisions that are being made. We can choose to run for office and see our names on the ballot in open and fair elections.

For those who want to help, a good place to start is the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center on Genesee Street in Buffalo. Visit <https://ukrainiansofbuffalo.com> for information and fundraising efforts, including its partnership with UB's Friends of Ukraine Club. I would also recommend visiting [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) for information.

As a reminder, anytime there is a crisis there are always dishonest organizations who are trying to benefit from the kindness of strangers. Avoid being scammed by doing your research if you choose to donate or support a relief effort. NYS Attorney General James warns about this on her website, [www.ag.ny.gov](http://www.ag.ny.gov), and if you need to report suspicious activity, please email [complaints@ag.ny.gov](mailto:complaints@ag.ny.gov).

Finally, we must remain unified during this dark time, condemning the attacks on Ukraine and its people.