

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2014

COMMITTEES:
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

BUDGET

SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Subcommittee on Seapower
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Seapower
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member McCain:

As you construct the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, I write to express my strong support for the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) and maintaining the current block buy contract.

The original contract called for shipyards in Wisconsin and Alabama to build 10 ships each— to be completed in FY2015. Specifically, there would be four ships awarded in FY2015, two for each shipyard. This strategy yielded significant cost savings and resulted in current ships costing half the cost of the first ships of its class. However, these gains are now threatened by the recent actions by the House Armed Services Committee.

The House Armed Services Committee's version of the FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act fully funds just two ships and includes an insufficient amount of advanced funding to begin preliminary work on additional ships. To be clear, breaking the block buy with either shipbuilder will cause price increases and schedule delays. This will impact contracts for FY2015 ships and all future ships of this class. In our constrained fiscal environment, this is an increase that the Navy cannot afford and will cost taxpayers more.

The President's FY 2015 budget proposed fully funding three LCS. Recently, Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert and Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus wrote to the House Armed Services Committee warning of their decision to fund just two ships this year. In the letter they state, "Deferring additional ships in FY2016 will compound the already significant challenges the Navy faces in funding the shipbuilding account in a fiscally constrained environment while increasing overall costs to the Navy." While the decision to fully fund only two ships will harm future Navy shipbuilding, it will also impact workers and suppliers across the country. The letter goes on to state, "Any further reductions to this program in FY2015 will have serious impacts to

the industrial base including sub-tier suppliers.” Attempts by the House Armed Services Committee to cut the LCS program will have damaging impacts on both employment and the over 1,350 suppliers across 42 states. These cuts should be rejected.

While I strongly believe that the LCS is the right ship for this budget environment, it is also the right ship for the future threats facing our Navy. Senior Navy leaders have been clear – LCS will deliver capabilities in mission areas that far exceed those capabilities in the fleet today. Closing these warfighting capability gaps will be extremely important as we continue operating forward in the Middle East region and as we continue to pivot toward the Asia-Pacific.

I am requesting that you reject the House Armed Services Committee position and support at minimum three ships fully funded with sufficient advanced funding for additional ships to keep our shipyards and suppliers whole. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you all as the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act moves forward.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator