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HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR, AND PENSION



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August 8, 2007

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
United States Senator, Hawaii
772 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inouye:

Knowing your strong interest in the future of our nation's strategic defense capabilities, I wanted to update you on an important step the House of Representatives recently took to invest in the future of our naval submarine fleet.

As you well know, our current one-a-year submarine procurement rate will place enormous pressure on the Navy and our combatant commanders in the future. Based on the Navy's own stated force requirements, we need to sustain an attack submarine level of at least 48 boats. However, under the current shipbuilding plan, our nation will have fewer than for a 14 year period between 2020 and 2033 - with a low of 40 ships from 2028 to 2029.

Having had a chance to speak to you during the commissioning of the USS Hawaii this past May at Submarine Base New London, I know you share my concern that this decrease in the submarine fleet will leave our nation less able to respond to future strategic threats.

To this end, I am happy to report that on August 4, 2007, the House passed its version of the FY2008 Defense Appropriations bill (H.R. 3222). The House bill includes \$588 million to support the advanced procurement of the long lead materials, such as a reactor and engine set, for an additional Virginia-class submarine as early as 2009. I was proud to join Chairman Murtha and countless others in working to reach this critical first step in ramping up attack submarine procurement to two per year.

As you continue to work on the Senate's FY08 Defense Appropriations bill, I hope you will consider lending the Senate's support to increasing Virginia-class procurement to two a year. I look forward to continuing to work with you to support our nation's Navy and submarine fleet. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I or my staff can be of any assistance to you.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress