

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

**A STRONG SUBMARINE FLEET
IS CRITICAL TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY**

Dear Colleague:

This week, the House will consider the Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 5658), an important bill that invests in our long-term national security by increasing our production of nuclear attack submarines (SSNs) to two a year in 2010.

A robust submarine fleet is critical to our long-term national security. In intelligence gathering, special operations, surveillance, reconnaissance and deterrence, the attack submarine is the platform of choice for our combatant commanders today. In fact, modern submarines are currently playing a critical role in our national security by undertaking vital missions as part of the Global War on Terror. For example, in testimony before the House Armed Services Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee last year, Admiral John Donnelly, Commander of Submarine Forces, stated that the Navy is “using submarines extensively on the global war on terror” and gathering intelligence “that’s briefed at the very highest levels of our government and military.”

According to the Navy’s own estimates, we will need to sustain a fleet of at least 48 submarines to meet the security challenges ahead. While Congress took the long-awaited step last year of accelerating the increased two-a-year build rate from 2012 to 2011, even at this accelerated rate we will dip below the minimum force structure for a 12-year period from FY2022-2033 – with a low of 41 boats from FY2028-2029. And, in 2007 the attack submarine force was only able to meet 54 percent of missions requested of it – and it will be asked to continue to “do more with less” as the demand for their unique stealth and intelligence capabilities increases while force levels decline. This will strain our ability to respond to and deter threats in the future, both known and unknown to us today, as other strategic competitors are investing in their own naval and submarine forces.

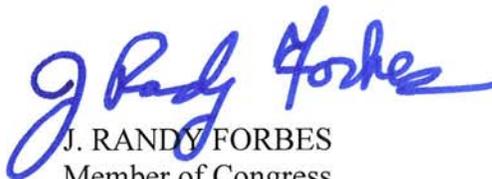
The bill before us this week continues our investment in the future of our submarine force by further accelerating an increased build rate of two-a-year from 2011 to 2010 – a step that will further close the impending shortfall in the submarine force and strengthen our domestic industrial base.

As we look at our current national security needs and the long-term challenges ahead, it is clear that one of the most important actions that we can take now is to increase attack submarine procurement to at least two a year as soon as possible. The FY2009 Defense Authorization bill brings us closer than ever to this critical goal, and we urge your support.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress



JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress



ROBERT J. WITTMAN
Member of Congress



BRAD ELLSWORTH
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