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February 21, 2018

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-305 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Visclosky,

As you work to complete a final appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2018, I write to once again encourage you to support increasing submarine construction to meet military requirements and match the clear intent of Congress to make significant investments in our undersea force.

On December 21, 2017, thirty five members of the House and I wrote to you to request your support for matching the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)'s investments in increased submarine construction.<sup>1</sup> As enacted, the NDAA included an additional \$698 million for submarine construction and the submarine industrial base. It also included multiyear procurement authority for up to thirteen submarines in the next block contract currently under negotiation—language which was also carried in Section 8010 of the House defense appropriations bill through an amendment I proposed which was adopted unanimously. The FY18 NDAA's passage with the highest margins since 2009 demonstrates that there is strong support in Congress for growing the undersea fleet.

Since December, several developments have underscored this request. First, Congress passed H.R.1892, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, earlier this month which provides for defense discretionary funding at levels equivalent to the Fiscal Year 2018 NDAA. These levels received support in both the NDAA and the budget agreement because they are critical to reversing readiness and capability gaps in our armed forces, including the expansion of our submarine force.

Second, the Department of the Navy published its annual 30-year shipbuilding plan. While the plan establishes a steady, minimum baseline of two new attack submarines per year, it also shows that our attack submarine force will not achieve the 66-boat level required by the Navy's latest Force Structure Assessment until 2048. However, the report identifies specific opportunities within the next block contract currently under negotiation to take advantage of shipyard capacity and expand our submarine force in 2022 and 2023. I believe that we should give the Navy the flexibility it needs to take advantage of these opportunities in the final FY18 appropriations bill.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense dated December 21, 2017 regarding submarine construction funding signed by 36 Member of the House of Representatives (attached).

Finally, the need to expand our submarine force was underscored last week by two of our military's most senior officers. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral Harry B. Harris, the Commander of U.S. Pacific Command, stated that with the current attack submarine force of 52 boats, "my requirements for submarines are only met by about half." He also noted that the attack submarine force is currently scheduled to shrink to just 41 boats in 2029 while US national security requirements in the Pacific will be increasingly challenged by Chinese and Russian military modernization. General Robert Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps, stated in remarks on Capitol Hill that "as a naval force [...] we need more submarines," to protect our amphibious forces and ensure that Marines can reach the battlefield in an anti-access, area-denial environment. Turning around major shifts in our naval forces require many years of advance planning and investments in our defense workforce and industrial base. If we are going to meet the national security requirements of tomorrow, we must start today.

Taken together, it is clear that the time is now to make necessary investments in our undersea force. To that end, I request that the final FY18 appropriations bill match, to the greatest extent possible, the NDAA's investment in submarine construction and retain the Section 8010 language allowing up to thirteen submarines in the next block contract. Thank you for your attention to this request and for your unwavering support of our national defense.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress



**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-405 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Granger and Ranking Member Visclosky,

As you complete negotiations on a final appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2018, we write to encourage you to support increased submarine construction funding to meet the Navy's requirements and match bipartisan investment included in the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) conference report.

Fast-attack submarines remain one of the most effective and sought after tools in our nation's arsenal. The Navy's December 2016 Force Structure Assessment (FSA) supported the testimony of our military commanders in stating that the United States should maintain a force of at least 66 fast attack submarines. This represents an increase from the previous requirement of 48 submarines, and is the largest increase in ship requirements in the new FSA. However, with the retirement of Los Angeles-class submarines at a faster rate than Virginia-class construction, the SSN force will drop to a low of just 41 submarines, more than one-third below the requirement to defend America's national security interests around the globe. Under plans reflected in the 2018 budget request to continue the two-per-year build rate, the attack submarine force will not meet minimum requirements until 2048.

With demand for undersea capabilities growing and the shortfall in the fleet approaching fast, it is clear that Congress must ensure that production meets the needs of our combatant commanders. To this end, the conference report for the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which received overwhelming support in both houses of Congress, included multiyear procurement (MYP) authority to procure up to thirteen submarines in the Block V contract – three more than requested in the budget for the next “block” contract. The NDAA also authorized \$698 million in additional funds for a third submarine in 2020, economic order quantity funding, and authorities to prepare the submarine industrial base for the future construction ramp-up. As you are aware, the House and Senate appropriations bills also endorsed increased submarine construction, with the House bill matching the NDAA's MYP authority for up to thirteen submarines in the Block V contract and the Senate bill including additional funding for the submarine industrial base.

As you complete the final appropriations bill, we strongly encourage you to fund the Virginia-class program in line with NDAA authorized-levels to the maximum extent possible. While the undersea industrial base is preparing to begin work on the new Columbia-class submarine, we believe that there is sufficient capacity to increase production of the Virginia-class submarine to help meet demand for undersea capabilities in the fleet, ramp up an efficient workforce to tackle Columbia, and boost our supplier network. It is vital that Congress send a clear signal of support to our fleet commanders and our industrial base by ensuring that the final funding package provides as robust an investment possible in our undersea fleet.

We additionally request that funding be provided with sufficient flexibility for the Navy and industrial base to allocate funding where it can provide maximum benefit to the construction schedule and the long-term interests of the taxpayer. Supplier development must be funded now due to the lead time necessary to add sustained capacity in the industrial base and to qualify new suppliers to perform complex work. Providing flexibility in how additional funds could be used would help maintain submarine construction schedules and reduce cost, while also helping the Navy maintain its operational submarine requirements.


We firmly believe that the final appropriations bill should follow Congress's clear direction to increase submarine construction while providing sufficient flexibility to the Navy and industry to mitigate the SSN shortfall. Thank you for your attention to this request and your unwavering support of our national defense.

Sincerely,

  
JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress


  
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Member of Congress

  
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Member of Congress

  
BRADLEY BYRNE  
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BRENDAN F. BOYLE  
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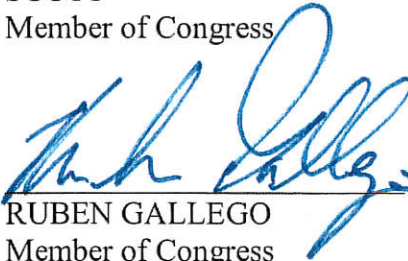
ROBERT C. "BOBBY"  
SCOTT  
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SCOTT PERRY  
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