

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

April 1, 2019

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

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

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Defense appropriations bill, we urge continued bipartisan support for the submarine force and the nationwide industrial base that supports it.

**Virginia-class Submarine**

The Virginia-class submarine remains one of the most effective and sought after tools in our nation's arsenal. In a recent Senate hearing, Admiral Philip Davidson, Commander of US Pacific Command, stated that "continuing to build submarines is critically important...[The submarine force] is our most significant advantage in all domains right now." With Russia continuing to field advanced undersea capabilities and China on track to reach an estimated force of 70 submarines by 2020, the US submarine force is at the forefront of great power competition and our combatant commanders will need more submarines, not fewer, in the coming decades.

Despite this strong and increasingly urgent demand for attack submarine capabilities, our fleet is on track to decline to just 42 boats in 2027 without additional investment. Further, under current plans the attack submarine force will face the deepest and most prolonged shortfall below military requirements of any ship type over the next thirty years. Simply stated, we are moving in the wrong direction and bold action is needed. This year, the Navy demonstrated its recognition of this need by adding funding for a third attack submarine to its budget request. This decision will not only help to mitigate this shortfall in the force, but will also allow the industrial base to continue expanding its capacity and bolster supplier predictability – to the benefit of all submarine programs, including Columbia. There is a two-year gap between the procurement of the first Columbia-class submarine in FY 2021 and the second in FY 2024. This third Virginia-class in FY 2020 will help mitigate this valley in workload and production at the shipyards and within the industrial base.

The FY 2020 budget request supports the Navy's plan to continue procurement of the newest Block V submarines, the first Virginia-class submarines to include the Virginia Payload Module (VPM). The VPM will ensure that the United States maintains significant long-range precision strike

capacity as Ohio-class SSGN submarines are retired in the mid-2020s. **We urge you to continue your strong support for the Virginia-class submarine program by:**

- **Fully funding Virginia-class procurement at the requested level of \$7.156 billion, which funds the procurement of three Virginia class submarines.**
- **Fully funding advance procurement at the requested level of \$1.888 billion and Economic Order of Quantity (EOQ) at the requested level of \$882 million to fully support Block V procurement.**
- **Fully funding Navy RDT&E, New Design SSN, at the requested level of \$121 million to support fielding advanced capabilities to the attack submarine fleet.**

### **Columbia-class Submarine**

Ballistic missile submarines are the backbone of the United States strategic deterrent. The Columbia-class submarine will replace the current Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines and will carry nearly seventy percent of our country's deployed nuclear arsenal. This program is the Department of Defense and Navy's number one acquisition priority and involves close cooperation with our British allies as they build the new Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarine which will share a common missile compartment with the Columbia-class. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review reaffirmed the central role that our sea-based nuclear deterrent will play in the coming decades.

Fiscal Year 2020 represents a significant step in the Columbia-class program. With official procurement coming in FY 2021, FY 2020 will continue a major ramp up in advance procurement of long lead time materials and advance construction of critical components. It is therefore critical that sufficient funding is delivered on time and that the submarine industrial base is prepared to fulfill procurement orders which are expected to double by 2021.

As you know, modern shipbuilding is a long-term investment which requires a healthy industrial base from the major shipyards down to small, often family-owned manufacturers. Particularly with small manufacturers, it can be difficult to absorb not only shortfalls and disruptions but also significant ramp ups in business. Many small suppliers simply do not have the capacity to produce the critical components that will be required to ramp up submarine construction in the coming years, putting at risk the aggressive construction schedules currently planned by the Navy and approved by Congress. In the last two years, Congress has provided needed funding with bipartisan, bicameral support to strengthen the submarine industrial base, but we believe that additional funds should be dedicated this year to continuing to diversify and certify suppliers of critical components and de-risk limited capacity in the industrial base where it exists. These investments are critical to ensuring the Department of Defense's number one acquisition priority can continue to maintain its already aggressive construction schedule and meet US deterrent requirements. **To this end, we urge you to continue your support for the Columbia-class program by:**

- **Funding Columbia-class advance procurement at \$1.852 billion, which includes an increase in funding for supplier development to \$175 million.**
- **Fully funding Navy RDT&E, Columbia Class Design, at the requested level of \$419 million to ensure maximum design completion in advance of construction.**

Thank you, as always, for your strong support for these undersea investment priorities. We look forward to working with you on this important issue this year.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress



JAMES R. LANGEVIN  
Member of Congress



ROB WITTMAN  
Member of Congress



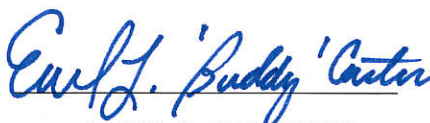
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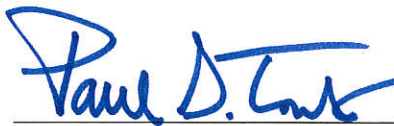
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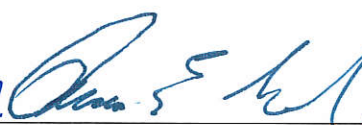
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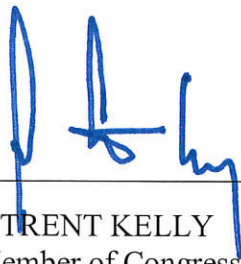
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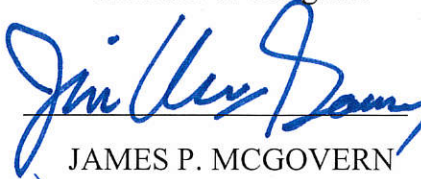
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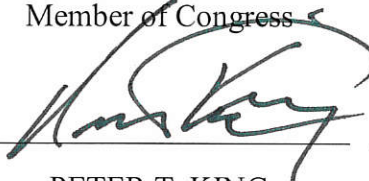
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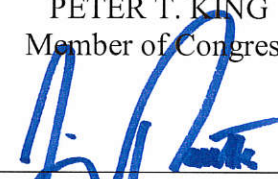
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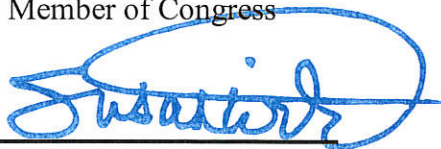
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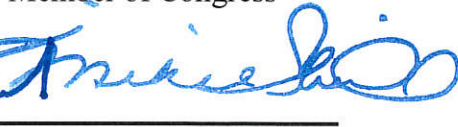
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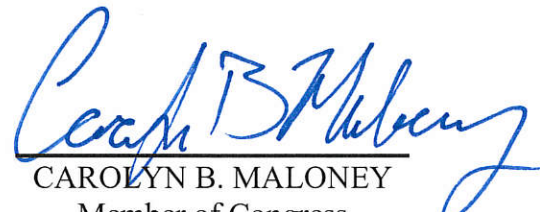
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