Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2008

The Honorable John P. Murtha
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
House Appropriations Committee
H-149 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murtha and Ranking Member Young:

As you continue to work on the Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Appropriations bill, we write today to respectfully urge your support for funding the *Virginia*-class nuclear attack submarine (SSN) program at the House-passed authorization level of $722 million above the President's budget, which would allow our nation to achieve a build rate of two submarines a year starting in 2010 ("2-in-10").

We are grateful for your subcommittee's leadership last year in securing $588 million in advanced procurement for the long lead materials necessary to begin building two submarines a year in 2011 – one year ahead of the Navy's previous schedule. Accelerating the build rate for Virginia-class was a necessary and long awaited step towards mitigating our future shortfall of SSNs and stabilizing the submarine shipbuilding industry. With much of last year's funding now on contract to procure critical parts of an additional submarine, we are closer than ever before to the long-awaited goal of building two *Virginia*-class submarines a year.

However, despite this critical achievement, the submarine force continues to face a challenging future. With much of the current force currently comprised of legacy boats from the 1980's, the fleet will be stretched in meeting the demands of our combatant commanders as the number of ships being decommissioned outpaces those being delivered. Based on the Navy's own stated force requirements, waiting until 2011 to increase procurement will leave our nation with fewer than 48 SSNs they need for a 12 year period between 2022 and 2033, with a low of 41 ships from 2028 to 2029.

In 2007, the attack submarine force was only able to meet 53 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. Although we might not be able to completely eliminate the eventual shortfall in hulls in the water, further reducing the gap by getting to 2-in-10 will only help strengthen the future of our submarine force.

At a time of great difficulty in naval shipbuilding, the teamwork and cooperation between the Navy and industry stands out above the rest by keeping delivery of new submarines on budget, on schedule and performing at record levels. Today, the programs stands within reach of the $2 billion per copy cost goal as the Navy prepares to negotiate the buy

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

for the third block of boats. These efforts can be augmented by Congress by accelerating to 2-in-10, which will provide increased savings for the Navy in the next block and provide greater stability and predictability in the submarine workforce and industrial base.

The fleet we build today is the one we will have tomorrow – and we simply do not know what security challenges we will face in the decades ahead. In recent years we have watched with concern as other strategic competitors have invested in their attack and strategic submarine fleet, which makes the need to ensure that our submarine force is well positioned to confront the unknown threats of the future even more critical. As we look to the long term global challenges ahead of us and the role that SSNs play in the defense of our nation, it is clear that the most important action that we can take in the short term is to further accelerate SSN procurement to two a year as soon as possible.

We know that you face many fiscal challenges this year given the long underfunding of our naval shipbuilding needs and other critical priorities for our national security. Thank you for your leadership and consideration, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen the future of our submarine force and shipbuilding industry.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress

J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress

ROBERT J. WITTMAN
Member of Congress

BRAD ELLSWORTH
Member of Congress

THOMAS H. ALLEN
Member of Congress

JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

THELMA D. DRAKE
Member of Congress

MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress

BETTY SUTTON
Member of Congress

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
Member of Congress

CAROL SHEA-PORTER
Member of Congress

PATRICK J. KENNEDY
Member of Congress

HENRY E. BROWN, Jr.
Member of Congress

ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress

CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress

MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
Member of Congress

ROBERT A. BRADY
Member of Congress

HANK JOHNSON
Member of Congress

ROBERT C. SCOTT
Member of Congress

BOB GOODLATTE
Member of Congress