

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 18, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Presidential Transition Office
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-Elect Obama:

Congratulations on your hard-fought and historic election. We are writing you because of your announced intention to reform and cut waste in the Department of Defense. As Virginians, we understand first-hand the importance of a strong national defense, and we appreciate your stated commitment to maintaining one. We also share your concern that in the midst of a ballooning budget deficit, a declining economy, and continued growth in entitlement spending, we must ensure every defense dollar is spent on the most important national security priorities, such as providing benefits for our soldiers, working towards a 313-ship Navy, and restoring readiness in our aging aircraft fleet, rather than on unnecessary or wasteful interests. We can be confident in the urgency of the matter at hand when even defense industry leaders agree that, "Business as usual is not an option,"¹ for our defense budget planning.

For this reason, we wanted to offer a bipartisan suggestion as to how you can save half a billion dollars that could be directed towards more critical defense priorities as you prepare your Fiscal Year 2010 budget. Today, the Navy announced its preference to expand its footprint by investing \$500 million to upgrade the Navy's port at Mayport, Florida to accommodate a nuclear aircraft carrier in addition to the existing East Coast port in Norfolk, Virginia. This cost does not include the additional annual expense of dredging in the harbor in Mayport or the personnel and operational impacts of starting up and shutting down the nuclear component of the port each time a carrier docks in Mayport.

Most importantly, this decision ignores the fact that there is no national security or strategic rationale requiring this buildup, unlike the decision in recent years to increase the proportion of the Navy's fleet in the Pacific from 50% to 60% to balance an expanding Chinese Navy. Some have suggested that our East Coast aircraft carriers must be strategically disbursed to avoid a Pearl Harbor-like attack. As any sailor can tell you, these carriers are dispersed around the world on a routine basis in times of peace, and in times of war. In fact, the last time all the carriers were in port at Norfolk for a matter of days, many pictures were taken because it was such a unique event.

Our concern remains that this would be an unwise use of taxpayer dollars in the face of a serious budget deficit. We are in agreement that we should focus on completing the ongoing consolidation of military facilities as prescribed in the 2005 BRAC law, not spending money to expand a footprint the Department of Defense asked Congress to reduce just three years ago. As Admiral Mike Mullen has stated, extensive analysis has demonstrated that we need a minimum of 313-ships in our Navy.² We do not see how we can get there if we do not make the tough

¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssTechMediaTelecomNews/idUSN1048805120081110>

² "Interview with Adm. Michael Mullen," *Defense News*, December 3, 2007.

budget choices and the easy ones. We humbly suggest to you that choosing not to expand the number of nuclear ports on the East Coast is one of the easy choices.

We look forward to your support on this issue and learning more about your vision for the Department of Defense. Thank you for your consideration, and we wish you the best in your transition.

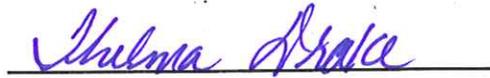
Sincerely,



J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress



BOBBY SCOTT
Member of Congress



THELMA DRAKE
Member of Congress



ROB WITTMAN
Member of Congress



GLENN NYE
Congressman-Elect

cc: The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
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Admiral Mike Mullen
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
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