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U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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ERIN C. CONATON, STAFF DIRECTOR

December 15, 2009

The Honorable Kathleen I. Ferguson
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations
SAF/IEI 1665 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1665

Dear Ms. Ferguson:

We wish to commend the Air Force for the recent modifications to its basing process and the Air Force's commitment to transparency. While it is incumbent for the Air Force to conduct enterprise-wide assessments internally, an open and transparent assessment of the resulting candidate installation "short list" is essential. In many cases, the transparency of the "short list" is driven by the Environmental Impact Statement process. However, in some instances of smaller realignment actions, it appears that this commitment to transparency breaks down.

It is our understanding that site survey teams representing Air Force major commands visiting Air Force installations to assess facilities for prospective new missions are no longer permitted to interact with local community representation per new guidelines originating within the Air Force. Instead, community representation is encouraged to work through base leadership vice directly with the site survey teams. This is problematic.

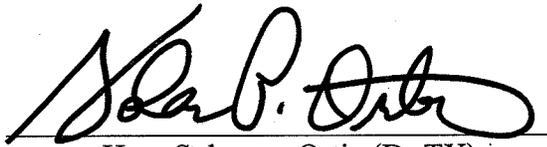
Given the economic impact of Air Force installations, local communities are often willing to expend funds, public and private, to renovate installation facilities or push local zoning legislation if it means the difference in attracting new or keeping existing missions. Without direct community interaction with site survey teams from major commands, community leadership is unable to learn about key metrics used in evaluating Air Force installations for new missions, or take action to more ably compete. Without direct community interaction, major commands are left unaware of a community's willingness to expend resources or affect local government. We are sure you would agree that enabling state and local government as well as

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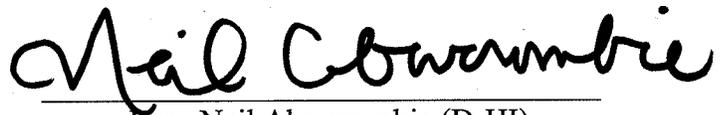
private organizations to support U.S. national security remains vital to maintaining America's robust federal system.

The Air Force is committed to transparency with Congress; we urge you commit to transparency with the states and localities as well. We ask that you reconsider any policy that seeks to limit local community interaction with Air Force major command representation—especially site survey teams.

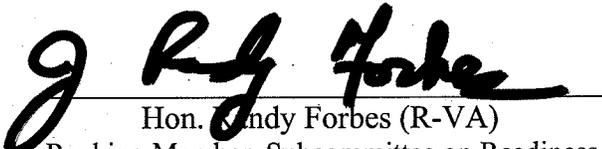
Sincerely,



Hon. Solomon Ortiz (D- TX)
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness



Hon. Neil Abercrombie (D-HI)
Chairman, Subcommittee on Air & Land Forces



Hon. Andy Forbes (R-VA)
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Readiness



Hon. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Air & Land Forces