

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2009

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 consider the President's Fiscal Year 2010 budget request for the Department of Defense, we write to urge your strong support for research and development of the Strategic Sea-Based Deterrent (SSBD), also known as the replacement of the Ohio-Class SSBN.

For over three decades, the Ohio-class SSBN has served as the cornerstone of our nation's strategic triad. The value of these submarines was recently confirmed by the 2009 Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States (SPRC), which found that "the Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) force is currently the most survivable [leg of the triad], meaning that no attacker could contemplate a nuclear attack on the United States without expecting U.S. retaliation" and that the "U.S. must continue to safeguard its security by maintaining an appropriately effective nuclear deterrent force."

The current fleet of 12 SSBNs, each originally designed for a 30 year service life, will begin to come off-line in 2027 after 42 years of unmatched service. The replacement of this platform has followed a rigorous validation process, with the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) concurring with the requirement for an SSBN-based strategic deterrent beyond the life of the OHIO Class and into the latter half of the century, a July 2008 Acquisition Decision Memorandum approved the concept, and an ongoing Analysis of Alternatives (AOA) that has ruled out all non-sea based options. While the future of the SSBN, as well as that of other platforms, is currently being considered by the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), there is no indication that these reviews will recommend termination of our sea-based deterrent.

Consistent with the recommendation of the RAND Corporation, the start of research and development efforts in 2010 helps provide a vital bridge to maintain our nation's unique submarine engineering and design industrial base. The funding requested will leverage the skills and experience of the design team responsible for designing the Virginia-class Submarine, a program which has delivered decreasing costs and production schedules. Designing the new SSBN will be a challenging process; however, by investing in our industrial base, we can ensure that our

taxpayers continue to get a high-quality, cost effective platform that will continue to defend our nation.

The Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act (PL 111- 23), which passed through Congress unanimously, correctly emphasized the importance of having a reliable design phase before construction begins on any new program. By beginning the development funding for the Ohio-class replacement ship in 2010, we can ensure that the design of this critical submarine will be ready to begin 2019 in order to have the new SSBN in service in time to ensure that we have no gap in our SSBN coverage when the current fleet begins to retire. Beginning the development funding now will ensure maturity of technologies to minimize risks to the design and construction schedules, as well as establish a foundation for affordability through the life cycle of the program.

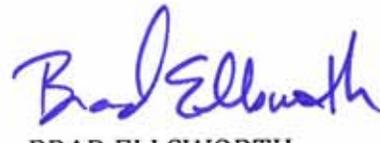
For all the above reasons, we respectfully request your strong support for follow-on SSBN program research and development in the FY2010 budget request. We realize you have many challenges ahead in crafting a defense budget this year, and thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

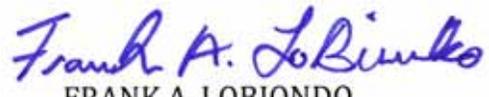

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress


JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member of Congress


J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress


BRAD ELLSWORTH
Member of Congress


ROBERT J. WITTMAN
Member of Congress


FRANK A. LOBIONDO
Member of Congress


GLENN C. NYE
Member of Congress


RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress



ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



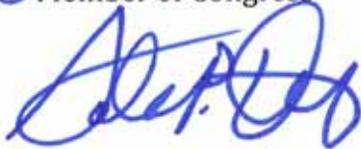
CAROL SHEA-PORTER
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



PAUL W. HODES
Member of Congress



SOLOMON P. ORTIZ
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
Member of Congress



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress