

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2024

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
122 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
122 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Collins:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 defense appropriations bill, we request steadfast bipartisan support for our undersea capabilities and industrial base.

We are deeply concerned the FY25 President's Budget Request only requests one Virginia Class submarine. Cutting funding for the Virginia-Class program sends a terrible message to the submarine industrial base working vigorously to rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Efforts like the Submarine Workforce and Industrial Base Initiative demonstrate a commitment to improving production methods and addressing staffing shortfalls, but these must be coupled with a strong commitment to production goals.

Preserving a consistent production schedule is essential for shipyard and industrial base stability, and to meet the Navy's operational requirements. This is exactly why Congress has strongly supported a two-per-year build rate for Virginia Class attack submarines since 2011. Reducing the submarine buying cadence will have the unfortunate effect of reducing the demand signal to the submarine industrial base's 16,000 suppliers, some of whom are sole-source suppliers. Losing any of these suppliers could prove catastrophic for the Virginia-class program.

Attack submarine capabilities remain one of our most distinct national security advantages. In recent years, Congress has heard disturbing testimony regarding growing capabilities and heightened undersea activity of competitors like Russia and China. The Virginia Class submarine continues to be a critical asset for combatant commanders to deter our adversaries and sustain our asymmetric advantage in the undersea domain. Unfortunately, our attack submarine fleet experiences significant shortfalls and is projected to decline to just 47 boats in 2030 – a 19 boat deficit from the requirement of 66 attack submarines.

While we applaud the FY25 budget request for including substantial investments in the submarine industrial base, consistent procurement of two Virginia Class submarines in FY 2025 is the best way to stabilize the industrial base and keep us on the pathway to 2.33 boats/year that is necessary to meet our requirements and that of our international partners.

The proposed request to procure one attack submarine is inconsistent with the Department of Defense's National Defense Industrial Strategy, which highlights procurement instability as a systemic challenge. This proposal signals a deviation from the Virginia Class procurement

profile in the FY 2024 Future Years Defense Plan and 30 Year Shipbuilding Plan. Steady production of the Virginia-class program, and the development of a follow-on attack submarine program, is paramount to maintaining our undersea advantage.

We respectfully request that you fully restore procurement for two Virginia Class submarines in FY 2025.

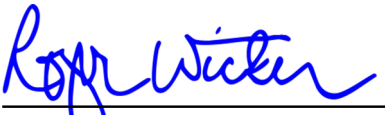
Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



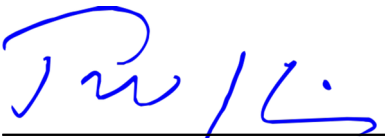
Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



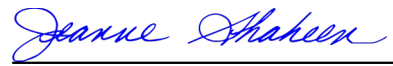
Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



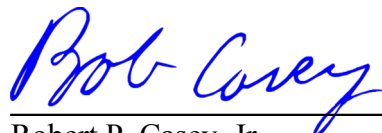
Rick Scott
United States Senator



Ted Budd
United States Senator



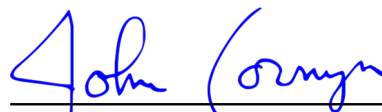
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator