

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you finalize the Fiscal Year 2015 budget request, we are writing with regard to the future of the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship (LCS). When you submit the Navy's 30-year ship building plan, we respectfully urge you to include a plan for the procurement of all 52 ships the Navy has stated it needs to meet the warfighting requirements of the combatant commanders.

LCS is a fast, versatile, fuel-efficient, highly capable, and relatively inexpensive ship. Moreover, it meets three critical warfighting needs the Navy has consistently deemed essential to its mission. Additionally, tens of thousands of hardworking Americans have jobs that depend on the continued construction of these valuable ships. The failure to produce all 52 Littoral Combat Ships would significantly reduce the size of our fleet, set back the Navy's shipbuilding program for decades, and thus damage America's national security. Truncating this important program would also harm our recovering economy.

LCS is tremendously important to the Navy as it addresses warfighting gaps in three critical mission areas: anti-surface warfare (particularly against fast inshore attack craft), anti-submarine warfare (most notably against a proliferating diesel electric submarine threat), and mine warfare. Our senior Navy leaders have been clear: LCS will deliver capabilities in these mission areas that far exceed those capabilities in the fleet today. Filling these warfighting capability gaps will be extremely important as we continue operating forward in the Middle East region and as we continue to pivot toward the Asia-Pacific.

Additionally, as we must adapt to a more fragmented, dispersed threat environment, our Navy needs to be able to work with a wide array of international partner navies. In addition to providing improved capabilities in anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, and mine warfare, the LCS allows us to engage seamlessly with less capable friends and allies in a wider array of missions to include anti-piracy, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Department of Defense is facing the prospect of tight budgets for the foreseeable future and the LCS is well-suited for this tough budget environment. Because of the LCS's versatility, it replaces three separate antiquated, inefficient ships that have reached the end of their service lives (30 Oliver Hazard Perry Class frigates, 14 Avenger Class mine countermeasures vessels, and 12 Osprey Class coastal mine hunters). Moreover, despite early concerns, the Navy and the shipyards have made substantial progress in getting production on schedule and costs under control. In fact, the unit cost of production for the LCS is on a marked, steady decline, and, as a result, the Navy is now purchasing LCS below the Congressionally-

mandated cost cap. As noted in the June 2013 GAO report, “[T]he Navy has made progress in addressing some of the early design and construction problems on the LCS..., and quality defects and unit costs are declining, now that the seaframes are in steady production. Based on projected learning curves, shipyard performance can be expected to continue to improve over time...”

Importantly, Congress just passed the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act, which established significant milestones and reporting requirements to thoroughly test and evaluate both seaframes and their associated mission packages. Particularly because of the demonstrated continued improvement in performance measurements of the LCS, we believe it is imprudent to change the long-standing plans for 52 ships before these tests and evaluations have taken place.

In fact, cutting this program now—at a time when significant efficiencies and savings are only just being realized—will introduce tremendous instability into the current program, the shipyards in Alabama and Wisconsin, and the broader shipbuilding industrial base. Lastly, this program provides high-quality, high-wage employment for workers across America. It will cost the economy thousands of jobs, and hurt economic growth in over forty states. Now, as the economy recovers, is not the time to be cutting back on the LCS program.

Because of the essential nature of its mission, its ability to fulfill that mission, its increasingly cost-efficient production, and the crucial economic benefits it brings across America, we respectfully urge you to protect the Littoral Combat Ship program. We urge you to sustain plans to buy all 52 ships in your Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

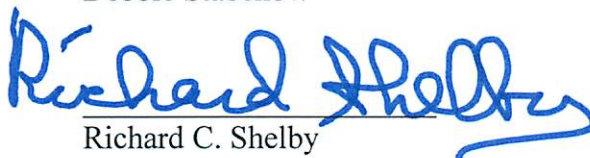
Sincerely,

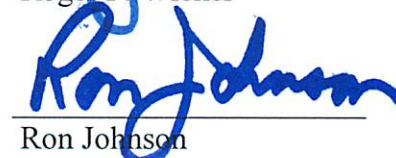

Tammy Baldwin


Jeff Sessions


Debbie Stabenow


Roger F. Wicker


Richard C. Shelby


Ron Johnson

Cc: The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Director, Office of Management and Budget

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