

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4607

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN RELATIONS

COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

January 20, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
Office of the Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hagel,

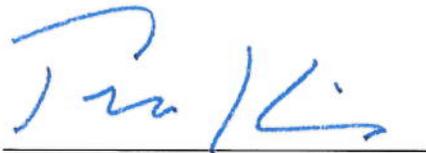
We write to you regarding the President's Fiscal Year 2016 budget, and to express continued support for the 11 aircraft carrier fleet, consistent with the statutory mandate and national security requirements.

The Fiscal Year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act and Fiscal Year 2015 Omnibus Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act fully funded the USS George Washington (CVN 73) refueling and complex overhaul, imparting a strong signal of congressional intent to maintain the statutory requirement of an 11 aircraft carrier fleet. We applaud the Department of Defense for taking the initial steps to maintain the 11 aircraft carrier fleet beyond 2015 through funding of the refuel and complex overhaul of the USS George Washington (CVN 73). As Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus stated in October 2011, "There's a law that we got to have 11 carriers. It's like gravity - it's not just a good idea, it's the law."

Aircraft carriers continue to be the "flexible force," and the most proven way for our Armed Forces to respond rapidly throughout the world to military and humanitarian crises. Carriers are the centerpieces of both defense and diplomatic policy, allowing the free flow of trade as well as a visible demonstration of force around the globe. The deployment of our carrier fleet to numerous conflict zones across the globe last year further demonstrates why we must continue to invest in this critical capability to ensure future military capacity and flexibility. Most recently, the USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77) was critical in responding with strikes against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and later assisted humanitarian relief efforts on Mt. Sinjar. When North Korea again threatened its neighbors in July by launching missiles, the USS George Washington (CVN 73) responded to deter any further escalation. As China continues to build a modern and regionally powerful Navy, maintaining an 11 carrier fleet is a vital aspect to our Asia-Pacific strategy. Whether in the Asia-Pacific region or responding to continued strife in the Middle East, our national leaders and combatant commanders require carriers to meet the threats in today's world.

We understand the uncertainty and constraints imposed by sequestration, and will work tirelessly in a bipartisan manner to reduce its harmful impacts. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working closely with you on this matter.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Senator Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

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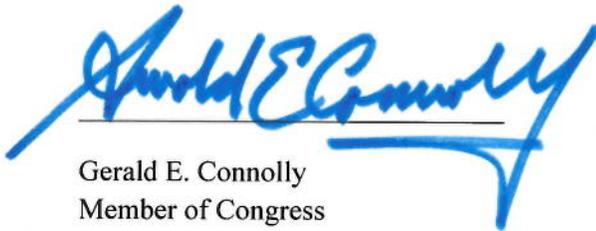
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