

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2012

The Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As members of the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus we write to ask for your continued support in funding for production of aircraft carriers. We are concerned by recent press statements that current budget challenges might be solved, in part, by reducing aircraft carrier funding. As Members of Congress, we are well aware of the need for shared sacrifice in times of economic challenge, yet we are equally aware that such belt tightening must not come at the expense of the nation's defense capability.

As you know, aircraft carriers are unparalleled in their ability to rapidly bring overwhelming force around the world to further American national security and economic interests. As threats to these interests multiply in numerous far-flung corners of the globe, we will continue to rely upon the unique capabilities and flexibility that aircraft carriers offer in defense of our nation.

More than 90 percent of international trade moves by sea. Aircraft carriers and their strike forces are the primary tools at our disposal to ensure the secure, continuous flow of trade vital to our economic prosperity across shipping lanes that our strategic rivals seek to dominate, and rogue elements constantly threaten.

The Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus firmly believes that our domestic shipbuilding industry is one of the most critical elements of America's global defense strategy and an important component of the nation's economic health. This industry also contributes significantly to our nation's manufacturing industrial base, employing tens of thousands of skilled workers nationwide.

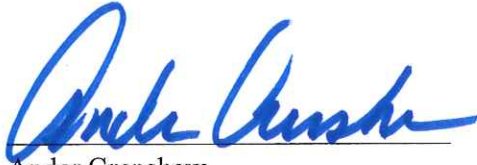
We are eager to work with our friends and colleagues in Congress and in the Executive Branch – on both sides of the aisle – to bring America back to economic health, and put Americans back to work. To do so while undercutting a bulwark of our national defense would be counterproductive, even dangerous.

We ask for your support in striking a balance that achieves both a strong national defense and healthy American economy.

Sincerely,


ROB WITTMAN
Member of Congress

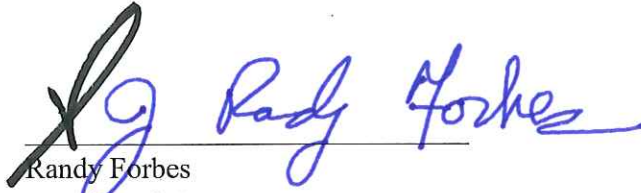

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



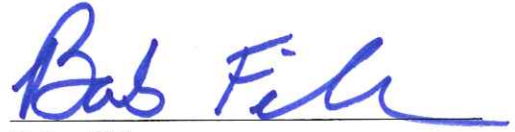
Ander Crenshaw
Member of Congress



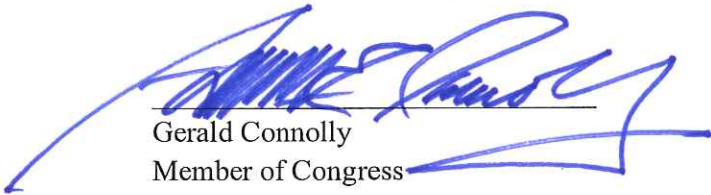
Robert Scott
Member of Congress



Randy Forbes
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Robert Filner
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Gerald Connolly
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Mark Critz
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Scott Rigell
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