

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2014

Dear Secretary Mabus:

As you consider the potential ban of tobacco sales throughout the Navy, we write to urge you to focus the Navy's limited resources on projects that directly impact operations. While we understand the Navy has determined that eliminating the sale of tobacco products may help to increase readiness, doing so denies sailors and Marines the choice to purchase a legal product.

Furthermore, a unilateral decision by the Navy to restrict access to a specific product means that an individual group of servicemen and women will be denied products that they choose to purchase on their own while their counterparts in other services will not.

Given the current fiscal climate, the strain on the Navy to conduct global operations, and the impending reduction to the size of the fleet and number of Sailors and Marines, we find it difficult to justify the continued focus on an issue that impacts a continually shrinking segment of the service. Last year alone tobacco sales in Navy Exchanges decreased by 12 percent indicating an already successful existing cessation program.

As we struggle to meet global challenges, we fail to see why new resources should be spent on paying for nicotine replacement therapy products instead of addressing the readiness, operations, and maintenance that have been deferred and directly impact the Navy's ability to carry out their mission.

While we certainly understand the health concerns of smoking, unfairly demonizing those who chose to do so undermines personal freedom. Given the daunting tasks at hand we hope that you will choose to focus on the most pressing issues of the day concerning our National Security instead of those of lesser impact.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your continued service to this nation.

Sincerely,



RICHARD HUDSON
Member of Congress



ANDY BARR
Member of Congress



HOWARD COBLE
Member of Congress



JEFF DUNCAN
Member of Congress



RENEE ELLMERS
Member of Congress



VIRGINIA FOXX
Member of Congress



TREY GOWDY
Member of Congress



RALPH HALL
Member of Congress



TIM HUELSKAMP
Member of Congress


WALTER JONES
Member of Congress


PATRICK McHENRY
Member of Congress


MIKE McINTYRE
Member of Congress


MARK MEADOWS
Member of Congress


MICK MULVANEY
Member of Congress


ROBERT PITTENGER
Member of Congress


TOM RICE
Member of Congress


SCOTT RIGELL
Member of Congress


HAL ROGERS
Member of Congress