

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 3, 2017

The Honorable John McCain  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed:

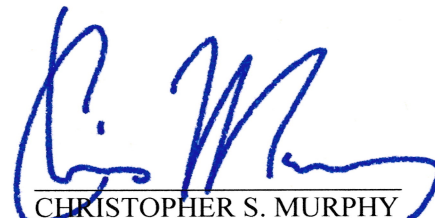
We write regarding the conference committee for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (NDAA). As passed by the Senate, this legislation contains provisions that strengthen defense policy and fortify our national security. As conference negotiations begin, we urge you to ensure the \$25 million above the President's request secured in the Senate-passed NDAA for Navy research and development funding for workforce partnerships for undersea programs is supported in the final version of the NDAA.

Robust funding for undersea research and development will allow the Navy to establish a new initiative to build stronger partnerships between Navy research labs, academia, and the shipyards that build our nation's submarine fleets. The Navy's 2016 Fleet Structure Assessment seeks to increase the number of attack submarines by 18, from 48 to 66. To substantially increase the fleet size, the \$25 million in additional funding will allow the Navy to develop new and innovative ways to improve the design and construction of existing and future undersea assets, including submarines and unmanned underwater vehicles. An academic partnership will complement existing Navy assets like the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, expand the Navy's research and development capabilities, and strengthen the ability to address future naval technology demands. It will also allow industry to benefit from new and more research facilities, manufacturing tools, outside engineering expertise, and workforce development efforts – strengthening industrial capacity to accelerate the development of advanced technologies and concepts to the Navy.

By supporting robust funding for Navy undersea research and development during conference, we will proactively strengthen our undersea capabilities – a superiority we must maintain as our adversaries seek to challenge us in this domain. We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate

  
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY  
United States Senate

  
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE  
United States Senate

cc: Chairman Mac Thornberry, House Armed Services Committee  
Ranking Member Adam Smith, House Armed Services Committee