

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 20, 2017

The Honorable Jim Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Sean Stackley
Acting Secretary of the Navy
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350

Dear Secretary Mattis & Secretary Stackley:

As you continue your work on the fiscal year 2018 budget request for the Department of Defense (DoD), we urge you to include the funding necessary to complete the U.S. Navy's stated requirements for strategic dispersal of capital ships by making Naval Station Mayport capable of homeporting a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN).

While we understand the realities of the fiscal environment, our Navy overleverages risk to our carrier fleet by having only one CVN homeport on the Eastern seaboard. Not only are our operational CVN in jeopardy, but our future capital ships under construction are practically co-located, risking tens of billions of dollars of assets as well as our ability to project power abroad now and in the future.

After the conventionally powered *John F. Kennedy* was decommissioned, the Navy prudently decided to complete construction necessary to make Mayport CVN capable. Originally endorsed in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, each subsequent Navy Secretary and Chief of Naval Operations has repeatedly validated this decision.

Former Secretary of Defense Gates noted "having a single [nuclear carrier] homeport has not been considered acceptable on the west coast and should not be considered acceptable on the east coast." Former Secretary of the Navy Mabus acknowledged that cost "does not negate the strategic rationale for dispersing the carrier fleet on the east coast." Most recently, CNO Admiral Richardson said "the strategic dispersal of aircraft carriers on the east coast is important ... we're almost there to making sure the Mayport facilities are fully aircraft carrier capable."

The Navy conducted a multi-year review process for developing CVN operational, maintenance, and support facilities and carefully weighed the strategic, operational, and environmental consequences before making its decision to bring CVN to Mayport as early as 2019. Despite these review processes, acknowledgment from senior leaders of the need for strategic dispersal, and multiple Government Accountability Office reports, this vital need is still unfulfilled.

Mayport is an ideal location because it offers strategic and operational value that enhances our national security posture. In addition to *John F. Kennedy*, it has been home to Atlantic Fleet carriers *Shangri-La*, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, *Forrestal*, and *Saratoga*. We implore you to no longer defer resource allocations needed for Mayport to continue its service to the carrier fleet.

Strategic dispersal of our capital ships is a long held Navy requirement. The risks to our current and future carrier fleet far exceed the one-time costs of making Mayport CVN capable. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to working with you to ensure the Department of Defense budget reflects the urgency of finally ensuring there is no longer a single point of failure in our eastern seaboard nuclear carrier homeporting strategy.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



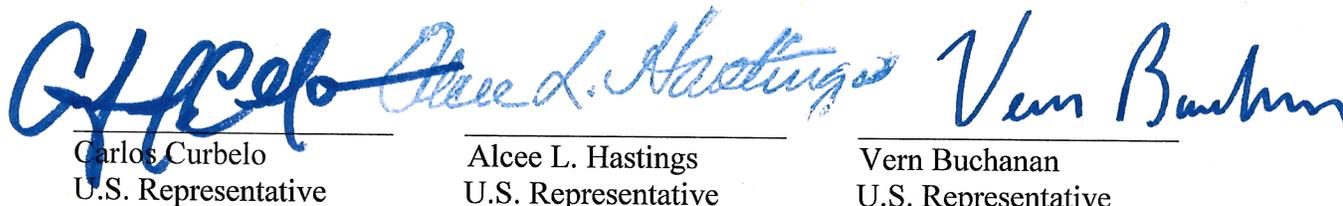
Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator



John Rutherford
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Darren Soto
U.S. Representative

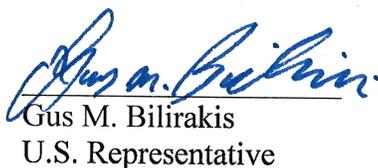
Matt Gaetz
U.S. Representative



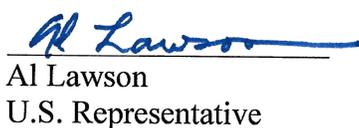
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Alcee L. Hastings
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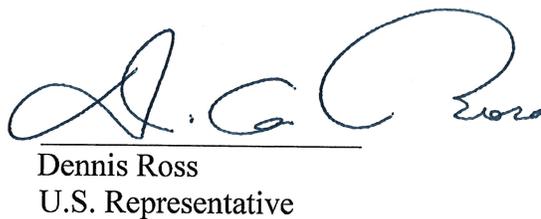
Vern Buchanan
U.S. Representative



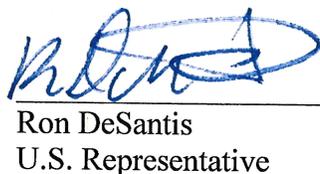
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