Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 11, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

As you continue your work on crafting the Department of Defense FY08 budget and Future Years Defense Program, we write to urge you to increase the Navy's top line allocation in order to provide the Navy the resources necessary to budget the $14.1 billion needed for new ship procurement.

As Members of the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus, we share a common concern for our future naval force structure and our nation's ability to build the ships of the future. The Navy's leadership recently submitted its long range plan for a 313-ship fleet to Congress, and approximately $14.1 billion in 2007 dollars will be needed annually to finance planned ship construction. While the top line budget of the Department of Defense has increased 51 percent during your tenure, the ship procurement budget has actually been cut by 16.8 percent. These budget cuts have shrunk the U.S. Navy fleet from 341 ships in 2001 to just 280 ships today. No matter how capable our ships are, no ship can be in two places simultaneously.

Additionally, there are recent Department of Defense reports that have highlighted the rapid expansion of China's blue water Navy, and many analysts project that China's Navy will actually outnumber the U.S. fleet by 2015. Intelligence reports have also underscored the fact that China is rapidly improving the capability of the naval ships it is building. Consequently, our national security demands that a priority be placed on rebuilding our naval fleet to counter existing and emerging threats.

Your support of the budget requirements outlined by Navy leadership is essential if we are to reverse the decline of our fleet and maintain our position as the dominant global maritime power. Thank you for your leadership in this area and for your commitment to strengthening our national security.

Sincerely,

John Davis VA-01

Gene Taylor

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Tim Ryan

Rob A Scally

Jim Langevin

Rick Larsen

Joe Schwarz M.D.

Charles W Dent

Patrick F Kennedy

Fred Strickland

Corrine Brown

Mike McIntyre

Sherrod Brown

Gene Green

Chris Smith

Bart Gordon

Gary L. Ackerman

Marion Berry

Rosa L. De Lauro

[illegible] Rahall

Wm. Jefferson

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

Tom Allen

Joe Wilson

Virgil Goode

[illegible]

Thelma Drake

[illegible]

[illegible]

Tom Davis

Eric Cantor

[illegible]

[illegible]

Rodney Alexander

Henry E. Brown, Jr.

Geoff Davis

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

J Rodney Forbes

[illegible]

Walter B. Jones

[illegible]

Michael H. Michael

Jo Bonner

Stephen L. Lynch

Melissa A. Hart

Neil Ebersmoble

Chip Pickering

Tom A. LaBrucle

Bert Sampson

Bob Goodlatte

Nancy L. Johnson

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Tim Z.

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Snarcy Kaptur

Michael Fitzpatrick