

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 1, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We were deeply troubled by the shipbuilding portion of the Navy's recently released budget request for Fiscal Year 2022, which reduced the number of planned ships from 12 to just eight. This sends the exact wrong message to our global competitors—particularly China, which now boasts the world's largest Navy fleet and is continuing to build modern warships at a breakneck pace.

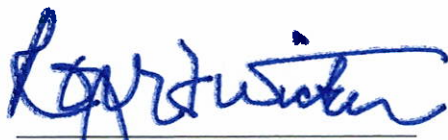
In your address to Congress last month, you declared, "We're in competition with China and other countries to win the 21st century. We're at a great inflection point in history... We have to compete more strenuously than we have." Seapower is the most relevant currency in the Western Pacific. Losing more Navy power relative to China would result in the loss of our ability to deter Chinese aggression against our regional partners and Beijing's disregard for maritime rule of law.

The most alarming aspect of the Navy's budget request is the planned reduction from two to a single *Arleigh Burke*-class DDG-51 Flight III destroyer. The DDG-51 class is by far the most successful warship program in modern history, with an unmatched ability to project power at sea. Other recent shipbuilding programs have been plagued by cost overruns, production delays, and immature technology, yet production of *Arleigh Burke* destroyers remains reliable and efficient. Recognizing this, the Navy in 2018 entered into a five-year multiyear contract that authorized procurement of a minimum of 10 destroyers. Our nation's shrinking shipbuilding industry relies on consistent orders to establish predictable, serial production rates. Removing a destroyer from the planned FY 2022 build rate would have adverse consequences to both the industry and its many thousands of employees.

Congress stands committed to building a Navy that can deter aggression and, when necessary, fight and win wars. Since 2017, it has been "the policy of the United States to have available, as soon as practicable, not fewer than 355 battle force ships (Public Law 115-91, Section 1025)." Unfortunately, the Navy is still struggling to reach 300 battle force ships, even as China surges past 360. This is a visible manifestation of the eroding competitive gap between the United States and China.

There is simply no shortcut to building the naval fleet that America needs. We urge you to intervene by restoring a second destroyer to the budget request and prioritizing reaching a 355-ship fleet.


Sincerely,



ROGER F. WICKER
United States Senator



CINDY HYDE-SMITH
United States Senator



BENNIE G. THOMPSON

Member of Congress



STEVEN M. PALAZZO

Member of Congress



TRENT KELLY

Member of Congress



MICHAEL GUEST

Member of Congress