Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2014

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As strong supporters of the Department of the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program, we are concerned with recent press reports that your Administration is recommending a 20 ship reduction to the total LCS purchase, potentially cutting procurement from 52 ships to 32 ships.

This move is a direct contradiction to what civilian and uniformed Navy leaders have advocated for during visits to both sides of Capitol Hill. We worry that the recommendation from the Acting Deputy Secretary of Defense to reduce the program by 20 ships is arbitrary in nature. We ask that your Administration support the Navy's requirement, which was designed and vetted through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council process.

The fact that the Oliver Hazard Perry Class frigates, Cyclone Class patrol craft, Osprey Class coastal mine hunters and Avenger Class mine countermeasures ships are all close to the end - if not past the end - of their respective service lives makes the need for the LCS all the more urgent. The mission areas these ships encompass are critically important to the Navy's overall mission, and there is no other ship in the fleet that can fill all these requirements in short order. The LCS offers a platform adaptable to the varied littoral missions of countering mines, small speed boats and diesel-electric submarines, and it is upgradable to integrate new technologies. It fits well within the Navy's new strategy to counter asymmetrical, anti-access, near-shore threats.

The Department secured a fixed price contract in 2010 – locking in costs to the taxpayer over the life of the deal. When the block buy is complete after Fiscal Year 2015, the Department can negotiate a new contract that will take into account cost saving efficiencies associated with experience in building. Cutting this program now without performing a thorough analysis of the Navy's strategic requirements would be akin to steering a rudderless ship. If we slow or cut production now, we will only increase costs to the program while doing nothing to fill the Navy's requirement for the vessels the LCS is set to replace.

While the current budget environment presents added challenges to the Department and the Navy's plans to expand the fleet to 306 ships, the LCS program has demonstrated that it can be built on budget and on time. The LCS truly stands to become, in the words of Secretary Mabus, "the backbone of the future fleet." Like Secretary Mabus, we are confident in the ability of the LCS and strongly urge your Administration's support of the Navy's stated requirement of 52 LCS.

Sincerely,

Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress

Reid J. Ribble
Member of Congress

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