

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to urge your Administration to fully invest in the F-35 Lightning II program and F135 modernization in the Fiscal Year 2023 Department of Defense (DoD) budget request and Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP).

The F-35 is the most capable and affordable aircraft proposed in the budget. It is a technological marvel that represents the best of American manufacturing and is the best equipment we can provide for both our warriors and for the taxpayers. More than 1,800 American suppliers contribute to the F-35 and half of those companies are a small or disadvantaged business. The F-35 supports more than 254,000 high-tech and high-paying American jobs and thousands of those workers are skilled union members.

Russia and China continue to advance surface-to-air missile systems and develop their own stealth fighters at an astonishing pace. DoD officials have testified for years that we must buy more F-35s to have enough by the mid-2020s to stay ahead of our adversaries. The F-35 is our nation's only 5th generation stealth fighter and is the only fighter in production that can be made in the numbers required to revitalize our aging fighter force.

Furthermore, the program is built on the U.S. military and our 14 allies buying these aircraft in quantities that leverage economies of scale to drive down costs. Today, the F-35 is not only the most advanced fighter in the world, but is lower in cost to procure, has comparable cost to operate and support, and provides unmatched capability to any 4th generation fighter. Now is the time to invest in our security and uphold our commitments to our allies to buy a minimum of 100 F-35s per year.

In addition to procuring more F-35s, we must fund F135 modernization. The F135 is the engine that powers all three variants of the F-35 and is the most powerful and advanced operational fighter engine in the world. For the last 10 years, the F135 has kept the F-35 flying without modernization due to its exceptional thermal management capacity. However, proposed weapons and system upgrades for the F-35 will require modernized propulsion. Our pacing threat, China, has doubled down on improving engines for their 5th generation fighter. Without continued investment in the future of propulsion we risk relinquishing our dominance in the air.

F135 modernization is a low-risk, variant common solution that will preserve an adaptive and maintenance-friendly design, while providing our service members with a critical technological advantage at great value to the taxpayer. We must carefully consider the implications of

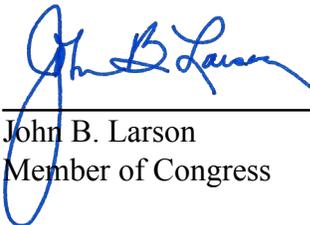
introducing an Adaptive Engine Transition Program (AETP) engine. The AETP engine cannot be integrated into all F-35s and would require remaking global supply and maintenance networks.

You are keenly aware that both Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush believed money spent on an alternate engine program diverts critical dollars away from more pressing DoD priorities. President Obama went as far as to threaten to veto any budget with an alternate engine in it. DoD Defense under both administrations has opposed the alternate engine program. It said in a statement, “In our view, it is a waste of taxpayer money that can be used to fund higher Departmental priorities and should be ended now.” When a bipartisan effort in Congress stopped the inclusion of alternative engine funding in the defense appropriations package, it saved the taxpayers upwards of \$3 billion dollars.

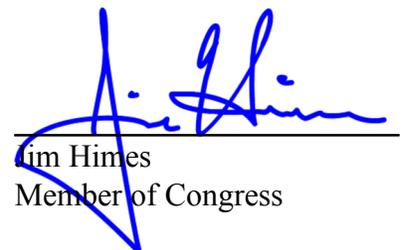
Mr. President, you have been through these battles. We have great respect for Chairman Smith, the Services, and other Members. If they want to assess multiple propulsion upgrade paths in order to properly respond to the threats at hand, then we agree. However, we want to ensure that any study comparing F135 modernization to AETP introduction should be comprehensive and include all variables, including remaking global supply and maintenance networks and examining the cost of implementing the engine into all F-35 variants.

Mr. President, we thank you for your attention to this matter. We know that you understand the importance and significance of the F-35, especially with the rising threat of China. It is an unrivaled national asset that strengthens national security, enhances global partnerships, powers economic growth across our communities, and is respected by both our warriors and taxpayers because of its efficiency. We must buy a minimum of 100 F-35s per year, invest in advanced capabilities and engine modernization to stay ahead of the threats, and fund the sustainment profile necessary to support these aircraft for decades to come. We urge you to direct DoD to continue to make critical investments in the F-35 program in the FY23 budget request and Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP).

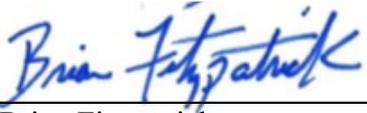
Sincerely,



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Shalanda Young, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget