

**International  
Association of  
Machinists and  
Aerospace Workers**



9000 Machinists Place  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-2687

Area Code 301-967-4500

OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

April 9, 2025

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the largest defense and aerospace union in the United States, I am writing to urge you to sign on to an important bipartisan letter in support of the F-35 Lightning II program (see attached sign-on and dear colleague letters). The letter, led by Representatives Marc Veasey (D-TX), Michael Turner (R-OH), John Larson (D-CT), and John Rutherford (R-FL), urges the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House Armed Services Committee and House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee to continue their support for the F-35 Lightning II and F-135 engine programs.

The F-35 is the most advanced fighter aircraft in the world, and continued investment in this program is essential to our national security and ensuring the United States maintains its air dominance. In addition, the F-35 provides for tens of thousands of high-skilled, Machinists Union jobs and supports more than 298,000 direct and indirect jobs nationwide.

To ensure future of U.S. air dominance and continued job creation, it is critical that Congress provide the necessary program funding. Specifically, the letter urges support for the President's budget request and any service unfunded requirements to incrementally fund a production ramp toward full-rate production. The letter also supports additional funding for modernization, spare parts and spare engines for increased readiness, and propulsion growth.

On behalf of aerospace workers across the country, I urge you to sign on to the attached bipartisan letter. Please [click here](#) to sign on via Quill or contact Luke Dube in Representative Veasey's office at [luke.dube@mail.house.gov](mailto:luke.dube@mail.house.gov), Zach Taylor in Representative Turner's office at [zachary.taylor@mail.house.gov](mailto:zachary.taylor@mail.house.gov), George Wang in Representative Larson's office at [george.wang@mail.house.gov](mailto:george.wang@mail.house.gov), or Kevin Alkinburg in Representative Rutherford's office at [kevin.alkinburg@mail.house.gov](mailto:kevin.alkinburg@mail.house.gov).

If you have any questions, please contact IAM National Legislative and Political Director Hasan Solomon at (202) 420-5902 or [hsolomon@iamaw.org](mailto:hsolomon@iamaw.org).

Sincerely,

Brian Bryant  
IAM International President

Dear Colleague:

As we develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 defense authorization and appropriations bills, we urge you to join us and support increased production and continued investment in the F-35 program. Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine as well as China's continued attempts to challenge Taiwan's sovereignty, has confirmed a return to near-peer competition, and it is critical that we continue to invest in the F-35 production – our nation's only 5th generation stealth fighter – in order to reduce overall program costs and ensure the United States maintains its competitive edge.

We are specifically requesting support for the President's budget request and any service unfunded requirements to incrementally fund a production ramp toward full rate production. We are also requesting additional funding for modernization, spare parts and spare engines for increased readiness, and propulsion growth.

Rapidly advancing threats require accelerating procurement of the F-35, the only 5th Generation stealth fighter in production. 5th Generation fighters combine capabilities and characteristics that cannot be replicated by other platforms, providing lethality, situational awareness, the denial of enemy situational awareness, and connectivity fused on a survivable aircraft that thrives in the forward line of combat.

Not only is continued commitment to the F-35 essential to meet the growing global threat, the program also contributes to our national economy by supporting more than 1,650 suppliers and more than 298,000 direct and indirect jobs across the country. This adds up to more than a \$72 billion annual economic impact across 47 states, DC and Puerto Rico.

Thank you for your continued support of the F-35 program and if you would like to sign onto the below letter, please click here to sign on with Quill. If you have any questions, please contact Luke Dube in Congressman Veasey's office, Zach Taylor in Congressman Turner's office, George Wang in Congressman Larson's office, or Kevin Alkinburg in Congressman Rutherford's office.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN](#)

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LETTER TEXT

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 defense authorization and appropriations bills, we urge your continued support for the F-35 Lightning II and the F135 engine programs. The F-35 remains the only fifth-generation stealth fighter produced by the United States, and continued investment is imperative to sustain production capacity, enhance capability, and ensure the U.S. maintains a decisive advantage over near-peer competitors.

The F-35 serves as the cornerstone of the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps' tactical fighter fleets due to its ability to penetrate contested airspace and act as a central node in joint operations. Designed as a network-centric platform, the F-35 gathers, processes, and disseminates vast amounts of data, enabling it

to coordinate other assets, including drones, and serves as a critical command-and-control hub. No other aircraft matches the integrated capabilities of the F-35 in joint and coalition warfare. Recent operational successes, including deployments to the Indo-Pacific, combat effectiveness in the Middle East, and integration in allied exercises, further underscore the F-35's strategic importance. The aircraft delivers unmatched stealth, connectivity, and interoperability, strengthening alliance-based deterrence and ensuring the U.S. and its allies maintain a technological edge in modern warfare.

Beyond its national security value, the F-35 program is a key driver of the U.S. manufacturing base, supporting over 225,000 high-tech, high-paying jobs across more than 1,800 suppliers, half of which are small or disadvantaged businesses. Thousands of these workers are skilled union members, reinforcing the program's role in sustaining American manufacturing leadership. Moreover, the F-35 program has a significant impact on local economies, with suppliers and subcontractors located in nearly every state, contributing to the growth and development of communities across the country.

To maintain the F-35's dominance, modernizing the F135 engine through the Engine Core Upgrade (ECU) is critical. While the F-35 airframe has undergone multiple upgrades, the F135 has not received a commensurate propulsion update since entering service. Without modernization, engine durability and sustainment costs will be negatively impacted. Full funding for the ECU program is necessary to restore engine life, reduce lifecycle costs, and meet growing power and thermal demands.

As global threats rise, the U.S. and its allies must stay the course and invest in the F-35's sustainment, production, and modernization. We urge the committee's support for the following priorities in FY26:  
**Sustainment:** We recommend an increase of \$500 million for the Air Force and Navy initial spares lines to address backlog, increase spares and depot material, and expand depot repair capacity. This investment will help improve mission capability rates and ensure the F-35 fleet remains ready to meet emerging threats. We also recommend a funding increase for critical spare and repair parts for the F135 engine.

**Production:** We urge support for the minimum procurement of 69 F-35 aircraft, as outlined in the FY25 Future Years Defense Program, to maintain fleet readiness and cost stability. This production level is essential to meet the warfighter's requirements and ensure the F-35 remains a vital component of U.S. and allied airpower.

**Modernization:** We recommend an additional \$400 million in funding to address existing shortfalls in current modernization projects, including enhancements to radar capabilities, software upgrades for Electronic Warfare systems, and Mission Systems improvements. This investment will be crucial for the continuation of key initiatives and ensure the F-35 remains ahead of emerging threats.

These investments are vital to maintaining the F-35's dominance and ensuring it remains the backbone of U.S. and allied airpower. We appreciate your leadership and consideration of these priorities, which will strengthen our national defense, sustain the American industrial base, and ensure the U.S. maintains air superiority well into the future.

Thank you for your continued support of the F-35 program and for your leadership on defense and national security issues.

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