

## **Support the Blumenauer-Mulvaney Amendment** ***Giving our Navy the Flexibility it Deserves to Make Strategic Decisions***

Dear Colleague:

In the midst of sequestration and shrinking defense budgets, our Navy is being pushed into shallow water. As such, it's more important than ever that we provide not just the Navy, but each branch of our military, with the flexibility it needs to make strategic choices in a challenging budget environment.

The Blumenauer-Mulvaney amendment simply allows the Navy to stay at its current level of 10 aircraft carriers, instead of going back to a Congressionally-mandated level of 11.

As former Secretary Gates said in 2010 to the Navy League: "To be sure, the need to project power across the oceans will never go away. But, consider the massive over-match the U.S. already enjoys. Consider, too, the growing anti-ship capabilities of adversaries. Do we really need eleven carrier strike groups for another 30 years when no other country has more than one?"

Nothing is more illustrative of the need for added flexibility than our Navy's current aircraft carrier program. Starting with the FY2006 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress imposed an unnecessary requirement on the Navy to maintain not less than 12 operational aircraft carriers. That number, after proving unsustainable for the Navy, was reduced to 11 in the FY2007 National Defense Authorization. The cap being too high again, the Navy had to seek out a waiver from Congress to temporarily drop to 10 operational carriers until the *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78) is commissioned into service in 2016.

Many leading military experts have said that the US could safely drop to as few as eight carriers. In an exercise to develop a strong defense in a reduced budget environment, seven leading organizations across the political spectrum (the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the American Enterprise Institute, Center for American Progress, Center for a New American Security, Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Foreign Policy Initiative, and the National Security Network), found that the Navy could reduce its operational fleet of carriers by between two and four, versus allowing for the *potential* of 1 in this amendment.

Regardless of whether this amendment passes or not, the Navy will have 11 carriers in 2016. Requiring the Navy to keep 11 carriers for the next 3 decades, however, is Congress telling the Navy how to do its job. Arbitrary minimum caps set by armchair admirals do not help the Navy fight and win wars. We've been at 10 carriers for the last 2 years and will continue to be at 10 through 2015, in the midst of a war in Afghanistan, unrest throughout the Middle East, and rising threats from Asia. Let's give the Navy the freedom to do its job.

By virtue of our geographic location, the U.S. will always need a strong Navy capable of crossing the expanses of ocean, providing the sea-based launch capability we lack on land in the Eastern Hemisphere. As a result, for the foreseeable future, the U.S. will likely need a greater number of carriers than the rest of the world. As technologies change, however, and other countries solidify their ability to counter our naval status quo, the U.S. Navy will need the flexibility to decide what its future fleet will look like; our amendment gives them the flexibility to do this.

Sequestration adds additional burdens, placing the Navy in dire need of budgetary flexibility, yet required to maintain an 11 carrier fleet at a cost of \$14.2 billion a piece. Instead of walling off defense spending for political reasons, we should be enabling our defense experts to make strategic decisions based on the national interest. We urge your support for the Blumenauer-Mulvaney amendment. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Harold in Rep Blumenauer's office (5.4811) or Graham Haile in Rep Mulvaney's office (5.5501).

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Mick Mulvaney  
Member of Congress