



**INTERNATIONAL
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LONNIE R. STEPHENSON
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October 7, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Defense Appropriations
Subcommittee
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Ranking Member
Senate Defense Appropriations
Subcommittee
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
House Defense Appropriations
Subcommittee
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
House Defense Appropriations
Subcommittee
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: FY 2021 Virginia Class Submarine Program Funding

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the 775,000 active and retired members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I am writing to ask for your support of the House of Representatives authorization and appropriation amounts for the Virginia class submarine program outlined in the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (H.R. 6395) and the Defense Appropriations Act, 2021 (H.R.7617).

Congress has recognized the need for the United States to grow our submarine fleet. This has been demonstrated by the consistent funding of two Virginia class submarines per year since FY 2011. This year the presidential budget request outlined a significant backslide, with a proposal that included only one submarine for FY 2021. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (S. 4049) authorizes \$472M over the presidential budget request, to procure materials with long lead times; however, it stops short of fully funding the program. The Senate's position relies on the ability of Congress to secure the funds, within a small window of time, to meet the timeline for the construction of the second submarine.

This meager funding will not only negatively impact the United States' attack submarine preparedness, but also our naval readiness status and capabilities globally. This is an alarming precedent to set considering that the Department of Defense reported that the People's Republic of China has vigorously invested in their own sea force and now has the largest navy in the world.¹

The IBEW supports the House's Armed Services and Appropriations committees' position that authorizes and fully funds two Virginia class submarines for FY 2021 in its defense bills. The William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (H.R. 6395) and the Defense Appropriations Act, 2021 (H.R.7617)

¹ Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China-2020," <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>





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Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Durbin, Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert

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authorizes and appropriates an additional \$2.5B above the presidential request. The House of Representatives position would provide the full funding needed to restore the second submarine in FY 2021. This provides certainty that the program will be allocated the resources it needs, without trusting that later defense bills will compensate the cuts in subsequent defense legislation. Predictable funding is vital to bolstering the U.S. submarine supply chain and ensuring workforce predictability at our nation's shipyards.

The IBEW represents thousands of members who work under collective bargaining agreements with commercial companies, which include Electric Boat in New London, Connecticut and Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Additionally, IBEW members are employed at naval and private sector shipyards with records as the leading producers of ships and submarines for the United States Navy, including Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Puget Sound in Washington state shipyards. IBEW members are electricians, helpers, apprentices, electronics mechanics, planners, inspectors, and trainers who will feel the impact of any interruption in submarine build rates.

As conference negotiations begin, I urge you to adopt the House of Representatives position that the Virginia class submarine program be fully funded for FY 2021. Preservation of the cadence in funding is paramount, not only for the success of the Virginia class program, but also for the implementation of the Columbia class submarine program. The impacts of underfunding this critical submarine program in FY 2021 will not be fully realized until we are pushed up against the FY 2024 target date, a critical point in the industry, where shipyards have already planned an extreme hiring initiative to commence.

It is of vital importance to consider the possible negative impact on our undersea force structure and to the families of the working professionals dedicated to its success. Any disruption in the submarine construction industry will adversely affect our defense readiness as well as American families already under significant economic distress. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,


Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President

LRS:nl

