

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 5, 2016

The Honorable Ashton Carter
U.S. Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We support the Department of Defense's (DoD) efforts to scrutinize costs carefully in order to eliminate waste in these very challenging fiscal times. However, in a well-intentioned effort to save money, DoD has pursued a misguided one-size-fits-all approach to its long-term temporary duty (TDY) policy, which has adversely affected our shipyard workers and could harm our nation's naval readiness. For this reason, we urge DoD to grant Naval Sea Systems Command's (NAVSEA) request for a waiver from and permanent change to the Joint Travel Regulation (JTR) long-term TDY per diem policy for naval civilian shipyard workers.

DoD's efforts to reduce TDY costs should start with a common sense and factual premise: not all TDY is of equal importance to our national security and military readiness. In order to reduce TDY expenses, DoD should eliminate unnecessary TDY—not cut the reimbursement rate for workers undertaking TDY that is essential to sustain military readiness. Long-term TDY in support of ship and submarine maintenance, modernization, and repair is clearly an example of essential TDY that requires workers with specialized skills and expertise to perform the work.

Predictably, DoD's approach is negatively affecting our shipyard workers, who often conduct long-term TDY assignments to maintain our nation's naval fleet. We are concerned that this new policy may reduce the number of shipyard workers who are willing to volunteer to perform long-term TDY travel, which poses a serious risk to mission readiness. In addition, we owe our dedicated shipyard workers, who make great sacrifices on our behalf, the assurance that they will not be responsible for expenses that should be paid by the government.

In its fiscal year 2016 Report on the National Defense Authorization Act, the Senate Armed Services Committee clearly expressed that the new policy should not discourage civilian workers at shipyards from volunteering for important TDY assignments. The Committee's concerns were validated by the January 19, 2016, letter sent by the Commander of NAVSEA, Admiral William Hilarides, to Mr. Anthony Kurta, the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee Charter Chair, requesting a waiver. Admiral Hilarides also recognizes the need and justification for a permanent exception to policy.

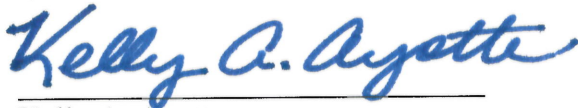
Admiral Hilarides wrote that the new policy **“has already had a negative impact on the Naval Shipyards’ ability to effectively and efficiently conduct Navy ship maintenance.”** He also said that the policy **“has the potential to increase the end cost of projects.”** We encourage you and your staff to consider the attached letter from Admiral Hilarides. It would be

unwise to brush aside this concern from the top naval officer responsible for the maintenance of our nation's ships and submarines.

We strongly urge DoD to grant Admiral Hilarides' request for an immediate waiver and change to the policy for naval shipyard civilian workers on long-term TDY who are supporting Navy ship maintenance requirements. If this waiver is not granted, and if DoD does not request such a policy change in its upcoming fiscal year 2017 budget request, we will seriously consider a statutory remedy.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



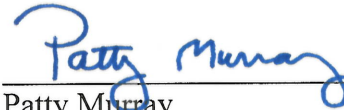
Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



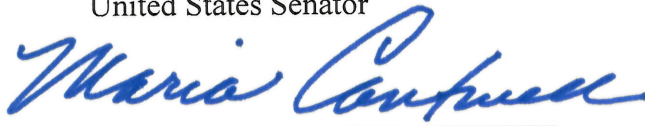
Susan Collins
United States Senator



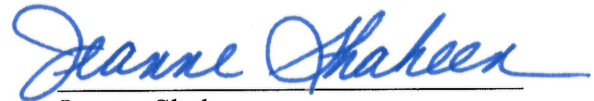
Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



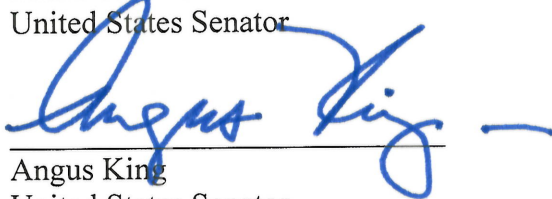
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Angus King
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy
Admiral John Richardson, Chief of Naval Operations
Admiral William Hilarides, Commander of NAVSEA
Mr. Anthony Kurta, Per Diem, Travel, and Transportation Allowance Committee Charter Chair

Attachment:

January 19, 2016, Letter from Vice Admiral William Hilarides to Mr. Anthony Kurta, Per Diem, Travel, and Transportation Allowance Committee Charter Chair