

*Senator Susan Collins*  
*FY2017 DoD Appropriations Bill*  
*May 26, 2016*

I commend Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski for their terrific work in putting together this bill, which addresses a myriad of complex and challenging issues facing our military and our nation.

I am particularly pleased that the bill funds important shipbuilding priorities identified by the U.S. Navy to meet ever-expanding military threats.

The bill funds the final installment of \$433 million to procure the additional DDG-51 that was authorized and for which \$1 billion was appropriated last year. Funding for the final installment was the Navy's second overall priority on its unfunded priorities list for 2017.

The bill also includes \$3.2 billion for the remaining two DDG-51s as part of the current cost-saving multiyear procurement contract. These destroyers are the workhorses of the Navy, and this additional ship will bring us closer to meeting combatant commander requirements of 450 ships. The Navy currently has only a total of 274, and today 101 of those are deployed.

I am also pleased that the bill funds \$272 million for the remaining two DDG-1000 destroyers. Investments in these ships ensure that our Navy's capabilities remain unrivaled in delivering power and presence across the world.

The bill also addresses severe fleet readiness shortfalls by increasing funding for ship depot maintenance and for shipyard Facility, Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization.

The bill recognizes, however, that achieving force readiness does not only include increasing the number of ships in our Navy. It means that we need well-trained personnel to be ready to accomplish our missions.

I am pleased that this bill recognizes the importance of the Shipyard Apprenticeship Program by mandating that no fewer than 100 apprentices shall be inducted into this program each year.

At the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, in Kittery, Maine, this exceptional program provides the highly trained and qualified personnel needed to overhaul, repair, and modernize our nation's nuclear powered submarine fleet.

The bill also provides \$5 million, consistent with the waiver authority included in the Defense authorization bill that the Senate will soon consider, for the Department to correct a problem with its Joint Travel Regulation that the Naval Sea Systems Command has said jeopardizes the ability of our public shipyards to effectively and efficiently conduct their missions. This funding ensures that we do not unfairly shift cost burdens to those who perform such missions while on long-term assignments.

Finally, I am pleased that other important programs are funded in the bill, including: increased funding for F-35s; \$600 million for U.S.-Israeli cooperative missile defense programs; and \$125 million to fight Boko Haram, one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups.

I commend the Chairman and Ranking Member for the excellent work they have done in crafting this bill. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this important legislation.

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