

Senator Susan Collins
Senate Floor Remarks
Defense Appropriations
August 21, 2018

Mr. President, as a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, let me begin my remarks by thanking Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Durbin, as well as Vice-Chairman Leahy, for their leadership on the Committee, and their advocacy for the men and women who defend our nation.

At a time when threats to our nation are increasing rather than decreasing, the work of the Defense Subcommittee is vitally important to ensure that our men and women in uniform, as well as our DOD civilian employees, have the training, ships, planes, vehicles, and other equipment that they need to defend our country.

The bipartisan bill reported out of Committee reaffirms the strategic importance of our Navy and shipbuilding programs by including funding for three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers in fiscal year 2019, while also including \$250 million in advanced procurement funding for an additional destroyer in fiscal year 2020. Mr. President, this funding signals our strong belief that the Navy should sustain an aggressive rate of growth for large surface combatants in fiscal year 2020 and beyond, in order to project strength in an increasingly dangerous and complex world. In recognition of national security imperatives, the Navy's own 2016 Fleet Structure Assessment increased the target number for Large Surface Combatants to 104 ships from the 88 ships called for under the previous 308-ship Navy requirement. Maintaining a steady and predictable production profile for large ships will not only protect the health of our shipbuilding industrial base, but also ensure that the Navy maintains an adequate number of these ships into the future.

In Maine, Mr. President, we are very proud of the vital role that Bath Iron Works plays in contributing to our national security by building and maintaining ships for the fleet. BIW is known throughout the fleet for the high-quality of its ships that are built there, with many sailors using the motto that "Bath Built is Best Built." BIW employs the finest shipbuilders, engineers, and designers in the world. This bill rightly recognizes the great value that these tried-and-tested warships bring to the Navy.

I am also proud of the continued investment this bill makes at our nation's public shipyards. The additional \$350 million provided for Facility Sustainment, Research, Restoration and Modernization, as well as \$176 million for "Shipyard Investment Acceleration," will help the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine, and the other public shipyards keep our Nation's submarines at sea for years to come.

This bill also makes critical investments in Research and Development programs, which are being carried out in partnership with research institutions such as the University of Maine. These programs include producing jet fuel from Maine's forest biomass; using structural thermoplastics for Army ground vehicles; conducting cellulose nanocomposite research for the Army; developing hybrid composite structures for the Navy; and participating in the Navy's

advanced hull form development initiative, among many other essential research and development projects.

Our legislation invests in cutting edge, fifth-generation aircraft by funding 89 F-35 aircraft. These state-of-the-art planes are truly the future of aviation, and I am proud of Pratt and Whitney's contributions to the program through its construction of the F135 engine at its facility in North Berwick, Maine. Additionally, our legislation procures eight Heavy Lift helicopters for the Marine Corps. The rotating drive shafts are a critical component of this aircraft and are produced at Hunting Dearborn's facility in Fryeburg, Maine.

The National Guard, as the presiding officer is well aware, provides our country with both a strategic and operational reserve which has proven itself time and time again. I applaud the bill's inclusion of providing \$900 million to the National Guard and Reserve Equipment account to modernize our reserve forces and ensure their full interoperability with the active duty force.

Finally, the committee report ensures that Congress has sufficient oversight over any efforts to close or realign facilities of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service. DFAS, as it is called, maintains a highly efficient facility in Limestone, Maine. It is responsible for payments to our service-members, DOD employees, vendors, and contractors. Given this critical responsibility, I applaud the work done by the hundreds of hardworking employees at Limestone and I welcome their continued support for our Armed Forces.

Mr. President, I am very pleased that we are proceeding with the Defense Appropriations bill as well as with the Labor HHS Appropriations legislation. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass both bills in one package this week. Thank you, Mr. President.

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