

Representative Ann Wagner (MO-2)

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about a key defense priority for the United States Navy – and our Nation – the EA-18G Growler.

The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review notes, “In the coming years, countries such as China will continue seeking to counter U.S. strengths using anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) approaches...” Full spectrum airborne electronic attack has been identified by the Navy and the Department of Defense as a critical and required capability for our forces to effectively and successfully operate in these challenging environments. As the Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert has stated, control of the electromagnetic spectrum is critical to the warfighting mission today and in the future.

As you know, the Growler is the Nation’s only full spectrum airborne electronic attack aircraft. It provides this unique capability off of Navy aircraft carriers and provides support for joint force land bases. It is truly the tip of the spear as our forces enter into contested air environments. Recognizing that there is a warfighting need, the CNO submitted an “unfunded priority” for 22 additional Growlers for congressional consideration of the Fiscal Year 2015 defense appropriations

The stakes are quite high, and the time to act is now. Without additional Growlers to meet the Navy’s unfunded priority, it is likely that the F/A-18 manufacturing line will shutter. To avoid this very predicament, last year Congress added \$75 million in Advanced Procurement funds for the F/A-18 in the Fiscal Year 2014 Defense Appropriations Act – enough for 22 aircraft.

Another critical consideration is the Nation's defense industrial base for tactical aviation. Today, there are multiple providers for tactical aviation, sophisticated tactical radars, and strike fighter engines. With the end of the F/A-18 production, however, DoD will be left with only a single manufacturer in each one of these areas. This scenario limits warfighting surge capacity, eliminates competition that drives innovation and cost control, and imperils future development programs. Moreover, the F/A-18 program supports American manufacturing, including 60,000 jobs, 800 different suppliers and vendors, and provides \$3 billion in annual economic impact.

For these reasons, I have authored a House letter to your subcommittee asking for consideration of the Navy's "unfunded priority" of additional Growlers. I hope it demonstrates to you that there is broad support for this request across Congress – to support both the warfighter and the defense industrial base.

I look forward to working with this subcommittee and supporting the Appropriations process as it moves through the House of Representatives.