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AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION &
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Congress of the United States
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February 29, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight two important provisions for inclusion in the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Your prompt consideration of these requests is greatly appreciated.

I would first like to discuss the inclusion in the base text of the bill bipartisan legislation I have sponsored modernizing United States Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards for agriculture producers. The current SBA size standard for this industry is established in statute and lacks a rational basis.

According to the USDA, the total value of farm products exceeds \$390 billion and agriculture-related firms support 16 million domestic jobs. The vast majority of these firms are small businesses and family-owned farms.

However, the advent of new technologies has greatly increased productivity, leading to lower prices for many commodities. These pressures on commodity prices are expected to grow as newer technologies are adopted.

This has led to the consolidation of many single family-owned operations into larger, multi family-owned operations. But, these operations remain small businesses.

Unfortunately, the current small business size standard for agriculture has been set in statute and is outdated. The standard is too low for the vast majority of farms and ranches to participate in potential government contracting and subcontracting opportunities.

In addition, the statutory standard has no rational basis. It appears to be a number that was picked out of the air by previous Congresses.

In the 30 years since enactment of the statutory size standard, the Small Business Administration has significantly improved its processes for determining small business size standards, addressing the

concerns that led previous Congresses to establish the standard in statute. I believe it is important that Congress and federal agencies promote consistency in policymaking and the inclusion of language in the NDAA allowing the SBA to establish a producer size standard will help ensure that consistency.

Another issue I believe requires the Committee's attention is the need for the procurement of additional F/A-18 Super Hornet aircraft. The F/A-18 is currently the only operational strike fighter line for the United States Navy, and is a significant national security asset we should act to protect.

The FY 2016 NDAA and FY 2016 Department of Defense Appropriations Act included funding for the procurement of 12 F/A-18s. However, this number may still be short of USN needs as the service has previously testified to a potential shortfall of 24 to 36 aircraft.

The procurement of additional F/A-18 Super Hornets is critical to meeting the anticipated needs of the USN and to keeping the production line open as the United States prepares anticipated aircraft sales to allied nations. It is also important to preserving the value of the St. Louis regions defense industrial base. Therefore, as the Committee prepares the FY 2017 NDAA, I request it authorize any aircraft requested by the USN.

Sincerely,



Mike Bost
Member of Congress