

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 12, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

We write to express our concern with the Air Force's commitment to the Combat Rescue Helicopter (CRH) program to recapitalize its fleet of search and rescue helicopters. These indispensable assets enable the critical mission of rescuing downed pilots, a mission that former Air Force Chief of Staff Michael Moseley once called a "moral imperative".

As you know, the CRH program will replace aging HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters with the latest technology modified to meet this highly specialized mission. The combat search and rescue mission is one of the highest utilized missions in the entire military. The legacy fleet has saved thousands of lives over the last decade and repeatedly proved the critical nature of this mission. The age and high operations tempo of the current helicopters, however, has driven up Operations and Maintenance costs and challenged mission readiness rates. Two unsuccessful Air Force efforts to recapitalize the legacy fleet have exacerbated this situation and prolonged the use of these more than thirty-year old assets.

The Air Force should be commended for its current effort to develop an effective acquisition strategy centered on a technically acceptable, best value selection likely to survive any protests that have doomed past acquisitions. The Air Force's CRH strategy to utilize a fixed-priced incentivized contract will allow it to recapitalize equipment in a budget constrained environment. We believe this mission is too important to allow arbitrary budget pressures to thwart providing these lifesaving aircraft, and the Air Force should move forward with its acquisition strategy to recapitalize the CRH fleet in an expeditious manner.

We therefore respectfully ask you to provide resolute support for the Combat Rescue Helicopter program in your future budget submissions. We appreciate that the Air Force has competing budgetary demands, but those must not interfere with equipping the Air Force to execute the vital and essential mission of rescuing downed pilots, as well as saving our service-members in harm's way.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you on this critical matter.

Sincerely,


ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress

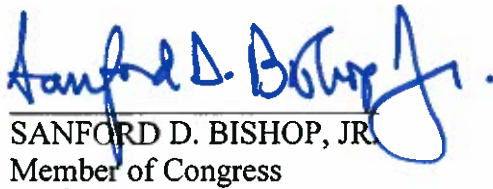

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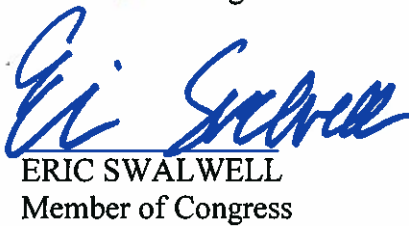

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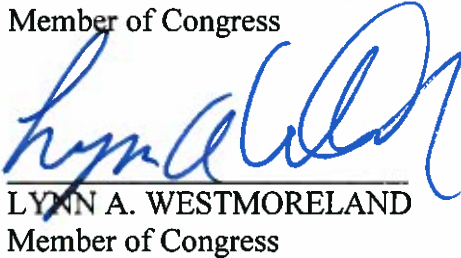

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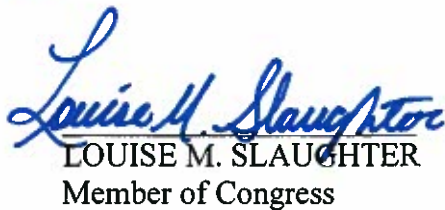

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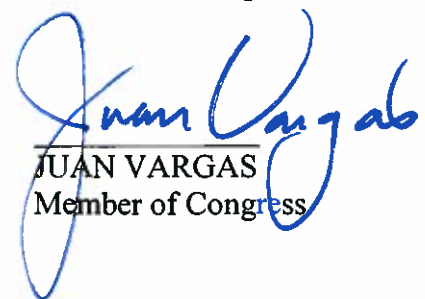

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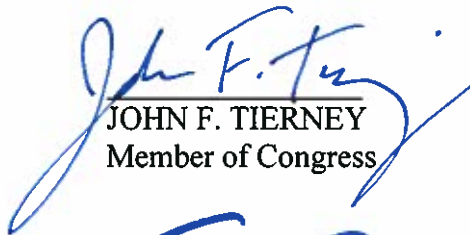

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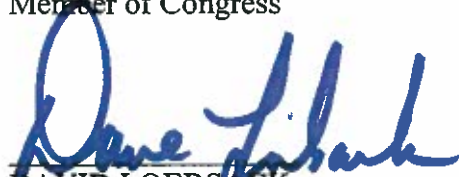

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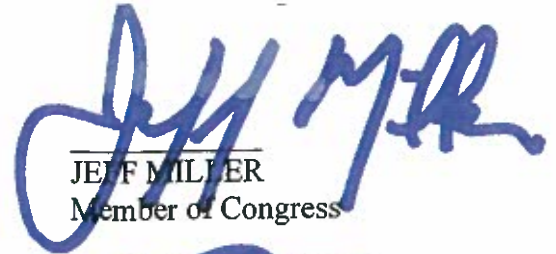

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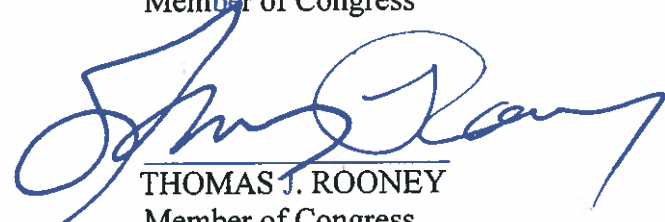

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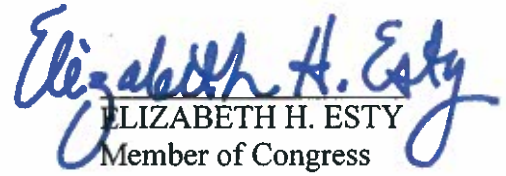

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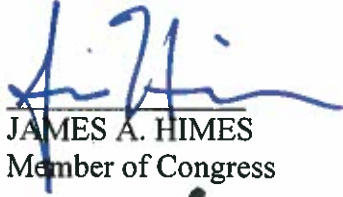

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