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August 19, 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 122
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 122
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Vice Chairman Cochran:

We express our continued support for the C-17 Globemaster III, and respectfully request that the committee include funding to procure 12 additional aircraft in the Fiscal Year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill. First and foremost, the C-17 has been critical in transporting troops and equipment to and from Iraq and Afghanistan and we do not see airlift needs abating anytime soon. Second, it is premature to shut down the C-17 line before the release of important air mobility reports in the coming months. And finally, we are concerned that without additional funding, our aerospace engineering, design and manufacturing base will atrophy, putting at risk our competitiveness on the global market, our ability to address future airlift requirements and put at risk 30,000 American jobs stretched across 43 states.

According to the U.S. Air Force, the C-17 is currently the only aircraft capable of performing every airlift mission, whether ferrying troops and supplies to remote airfields overseas or returning wounded service members back home. As a result, it has been a workhorse in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Congressional Research Service has indicated that the C-17 was designed to fly 1,000 hours per year over 30 years, but as our overseas commitments have grown since 2001, the fleet has averaged 1,250 hours per aircraft over the last ten years. Some aircraft have even reached 2,400 flying hours in a single year. This heavy usage, coupled with the growing size of the Army and Marine Corps, has only increased the demand for this critical airlift capability. In fact, on July 21, 2009, the Senate voted 93-1 to authorize the expansion of the Army by 30,000 soldiers. It is critical that we provide our growing force with the equipment it needs to fight and win our nation's wars.

Unfortunately, there is no time to spare in making this decision. The C-17 production line will shut down in 2010, and restarting production would be incredibly difficult and expensive. According to a November 2008 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study, restarting the line could cost up to \$1 billion. The study further noted that "careful planning is needed to ensure the C-17 production line is not ended

prematurely and later restarted at substantial cost.” Additionally, the GAO found that “both the manufacturer and Air Force agree that shutting down and restarting production would not be feasible or cost effective.” In our view, it would be extremely risky to discontinue C-17 production before the Quadrennial Defense Review and the upcoming Mobility Capability and Requirements Study have reassessed our requirements, provided that these studies are based on sound requirements-driven analysis. Until our airlift requirements can be accurately re-evaluated, we respectfully request that the C-17 remain funded.

Keeping the C-17 line open is critical not only for our national defense, but for thousands of American workers that rely on this aircraft for their livelihood. The aerospace industry has been deeply affected by the economic recession. According to the Federal Reserve’s July 15, 2009 *Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization Report*, manufacturing production has declined 15.5 percent nationwide between June 2008 and June 2009, and this quarter’s manufacturing production is the lowest in 27 years. With a waning demand for commercial aircraft and a lull in military fighter jet production, it is more critical than ever that we maintain the aerospace industrial base that runs the only remaining wide-body assembly line in the United States.

In closing, we reiterate that terminating the C-17 will not only undermine our national security, but severely degrade our ability to maintain a viable and competitive aerospace industry.

We appreciate your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Chris Dodd

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Kay Bailey Hutchison

Dianne Feinstein

Patty Murray

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Jim Clark

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~~James~~
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