

Virginia Senators Encourage Navy to Work with Virginia's Ship Repair Industry to Balance Delayed Workloads



From the office of Senator Mark R. Warner, D-Virginia

WASHINGTON – In light of the extended deployment of Virginia-based Navy ships, including the USS *Gerald R. Ford*, U.S. Sens. Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine (both D-VA) sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of the Navy John Phelan encouraging him to use the appropriate tools and authorities to ensure ship repair workloads in the Commonwealth remain level, and that the Navy works with industry to prepare for upcoming maintenance demand. The *Ford's* near historic deployment, emergency repairs, and compressed maintenance cycle have disrupted the ship's scheduled servicing, which also impacts Virginia's skilled tradespeople who repair and modernize ships.

The senators began, "We write to request, in light of the Navy's surge of deployments in the Caribbean and to the Middle East, that your Department utilize all appropriate tools and authorities to manage resulting maintenance needs, and work with industry to appropriately align demand with repair yard planning and capacity."

The senators encouraged the Navy to coordinate closely with industry to balance foreseeable demand and award contracts for known but stalled maintenance periods to mitigate delays that may result from the changes to operational schedules. The Navy should work with industry on the planning, ship checks, purchasing long-lead time materials, and any prefabrication efforts to ensure ships get back into operations quickly.

The senators continued, "Virginia is home to a storied shipbuilding and repair industry, one that has created and sustained many of America's greatest military and merchant ships. Virginia remains an ideal partner for the Navy to build and repair these ships, with capable shipyards and repair facilities, a talented and agile workforce, and a robust industrial base dedicated to keeping the military, maritime industry, and American economy afloat. Please keep the yards level-loaded and our tradespeople working without fear of layoffs during this significant operational period for our

Navy.”

Read the full letter [here](#) and below.

Dear Secretary Phelan,

We write to request, in light of the Navy’s surge of deployments in the Caribbean and to the Middle East, that your Department utilize all appropriate tools and authorities to manage resulting maintenance needs, and work with industry to appropriately align demand with repair yard planning and capacity.

This operational tempo has had repercussions on the fleet, with the USS Gerald R. Ford now on a ten-month deployment, missing her original maintenance window and needing emergency repairs after an onboard fire. Deployments approaching historic lengths, compressed maintenance cycles, and ongoing operational demands have disrupted scheduled ship repairs in Virginia, as well as across the country. Not only do these extended deployments impact our servicemembers and their families, but we also note that these disruptions are borne by thousands of skilled tradespeople, regional economies, and the maritime industrial base across the country who repair and modernize our ships and get them ready to fight.

We encourage the Navy to be forward leaning in its strategy to manage this foreseeable demand, and work closely with industry to prepare for and balance the workload. To the greatest possible extent, the Navy should be utilizing available authorities and flexibilities to award contracts for known but delayed maintenance periods to mitigate delays that may result from the changes to operational schedules. The Navy should use

this time to work with industry on the planning, ship checks, purchasing long-lead time materials, and any prefabrication efforts to ensure these ships get back into operations quickly.

Virginia is home to a storied shipbuilding and repair industry, one that has created and sustained many of America's greatest military and merchant ships. Virginia remains an ideal partner for the Navy to build and repair these ships, with capable shipyards and repair facilities, a talented and agile workforce, and a robust industrial base dedicated to keeping the military, maritime industry, and American economy afloat. Please keep the yards level-loaded and our tradespeople working without fear of layoffs during this significant operational period for our Navy.

We urge you to continue to coordinate closely with ship repair industry leaders, and please do not hesitate to bring us into conversation to ensure the Navy and Virginia's ship repair industry has the authority, funds, and policies in place to support sustained, balanced, and coordinated ship repairs for the Navy.