

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2009

Senator Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John McCain
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Ike Skelton
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Congressman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Levin and Skelton and Ranking Members McCain and McKeon:

As you work on the conference agreement between the House and Senate versions of the National Defense Authorization Act for the Fiscal Year 2010, we are writing to respectfully request that you retain the House provision that provides for a Comptroller General Report on Navy Security Measures for Laurelwood Housing Complex, Naval Weapon Station, Earle, New Jersey.

More than 20 years ago, the Navy entered a 52-year Section 801 Housing agreement to build 300 "Laurelwood" units on Weapons Station Earle. Owing to changes in home porting initiated in the 1990s, there are simply no sailors or dependents to live there. Even though virtually all of the Laurelwood housing area is vacant, the contract stipulates mandatory federal payment to the developer—at least \$3.5 million per year—regardless of occupancy. The contract states that during the out-lease period, which becomes effective in 2010 and ends in 2040, the developer is free to make all 300 housing units available to general public renters, with a guarantee of unimpeded access to the housing area inside one of the most sensitive munitions depots in the country.

The Navy reached a decision to provide unimpeded access to the Laurelwood housing area as required by its agreement with the developer of the Laurelwood housing area. While the decision was reached based on the analysis from the Environmental Impact Statement, there has not been a process installed to examine all costs associated with the full agreement. Additionally, there are deep concerns regarding the cost of providing additional security measures for the base.

We request that you keep the House language that provides for a Comptroller General Report on the Laurelwood Housing Complex, Naval Weapon Station, Earle, New Jersey. A comprehensive

study will allow the Navy and community stakeholders to fully understand the implications of carrying out this decision.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


ROBERT MENENDEZ


FRANK R. LAUTENBERG