

Rebuilding sea services would help this region

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Pittsburgh has long been a source for the materials and equipment necessary for our national defense. The propulsion equipment for submarines and aircraft carriers comes from manufacturers in the Steel Valley, as it has for generations. A strong fleet ensures freedom of the seas and guarantees the level of commerce needed to ensure a robust economy.

In critical global areas, freedom is being challenged. China's influence in the southwestern Pacific is already being felt by our trading partners. A resurgent Russian naval influence is the result of their leaders trying to regain what they lost at the end of the Cold War. The reappearance of Russian surveillance ships near America's submarine bases is definitely a concern for a Navy that is already resource-strapped with existing obligations in the prolonged conflicts in the Middle East.

As Congress prepares its budgets, sensible but strong support for the rebuilding of our fleet must be supported by all citizens. Our submarine forces need new boats to answer the gap left by an aging fleet. Boats that were built in the 1980s are being retired faster than our ability to build replacements. Even some of the mighty Ohio class submarines are more than 35 years old. A replacement must be built as soon as possible to ensure our strategic abilities.

It is time for Congress to act. I urge all Pittsburghers to contact their senators and representatives and support the rebuilding of America's sea services. This is a critical time in our history and your support is needed now. This is the cost of freedom.

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