United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 16, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President-Elect of the United States
The President's Transition Team
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-elect Obama:

The fiscal year 2009 National Defense Authorization Act requires your certification on continued F-22 production by March 1, 2009. We urge your certification of continued production of the F-22 Raptor. The F-22 Raptor is the nation's most capable fighter and the world's *only* operational fifth generation fighter aircraft in full-rate production. The F-22 is a model production line and, since full-rate production began, the unit flyaway cost has decreased 35 percent.

The F-22 is optimized to achieve the air dominance necessary to protect our joint fighting forces in any future conflict. However, a fleet of 183 aircraft, the current program of record, is insufficient to meet potential threats. After accounting for test, training, and maintenance aircraft, only about 100 F-22s would be immediately available for combat at any given time. Even those who don't support continued production of the F-22 agree that to sustain the currently planned level of combat-coded aircraft over the life of the program will require an additional lot of aircraft. In fact, 30+ air campaign studies completed over the last 15 years have validated a requirement for far more than 183 F-22 Raptors to replace the original force of 800 F-15 A-D Eagles. Some have suggested filling the remaining F-22 requirement with other aircraft, like the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. However, the F-35 is designed for multi-role strike missions and not optimized for the air dominance missions of the F-22.

Further, we must not overlook the fact that our potential adversaries are increasing their air combat capabilities both in terms of technology and numbers of aircraft. Several have announced that they are developing stealthy, twin-engine, high-altitude, fifth generation fighters that will reach production within the next five to ten years. Additionally, sophisticated and highly lethal air defense systems such as the SA-20, and S-300/400 are proliferating worldwide resulting in the possible requirement to achieve air dominance in multiple theaters simultaneously.

The F-22 program annually provides over $12 billion of economic activity to the national economy, it fulfills a validated Air Force requirement, and it helps to sustain our strong national defense industrial base. If this certification is not provided, layoffs will begin as this critical supplier base shuts down, and it will quickly become expensive or perhaps impossible to reconstitute in the event the Department of Defense chooses to procure additional F-22's at a later date. Furthermore, certifying continued production by March 2009 will enable production to continue while the Department undertakes a more in-depth analysis of the F-22 requirement in the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).

Over 25,000 Americans work for the 1,000+ suppliers in 44 states that manufacture the F-22. Moreover, it is estimated that another 70,000 additional Americans indirectly owe their jobs to this program. As we face one of the most trying economic times in recent history it is critical to preserve existing high paying, specialized jobs that are critical to our nation's defense.

With these things in mind, we urge you to expeditiously certify that continued production is in the economic and national interest of the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Saxby Chambliss

Patty Murray

Jim McCrery

Edward M. Kennedy

Judd Gregg

Chris Dodd

Michael B. Enzi

Bill Martinez

Kay Bailey Hutchison

John F. Kerry

Jon Tester

Harry R. Hagan

Mary L. Landrieu

Bill Nelson

E. Benjamin Nelson

John Thune

Tom Udall

Orrin Hatch

Susan M. Collins

Mike Crapo

Max Baucus

Richard C. Shelby

Barbara A. Mikulski

Frank R. Lautenberg

George V. Voinovich

Dianne Feinstein

Charles Schumer

Barbara Boxer

Orrin Hatch

Daniel K. Inouye

Chuck Grassley

Jim Johnson

Robert C. Byrd

John Cornyn

David Vitter

Lisa Murkowski

Jeff Merkley

Joe Lieberman

Mark Begich

Maria Cantwell

Joanne Shaheen