

**ROBERT J. WITTMAN**

1ST DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
RANKING MEMBER, SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES  
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL  
SHIPBUILDING CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL  
CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL  
PUBLIC HEALTH CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL  
RURAL BROADBAND CAUCUS



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
2055 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4261

DISTRICT OFFICES:

STAFFORD OFFICE  
95 DUNN DRIVE SUITE 201  
STAFFORD, VA 22556  
(540) 659-2734

MECHANICSVILLE OFFICE  
6501 MECHANICSVILLE TURNPIKE SUITE 102  
MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23111  
(804) 730-6595

MIDDLE PENINSULA OFFICE  
508 CHURCH LANE  
P.O. Box 3106  
TAPPAHANNOCK, VA 22560  
(804) 443-0668

[WWW.WITTMAN.HOUSE.GOV](http://WWW.WITTMAN.HOUSE.GOV)

March 25, 2022

General David H. Berger  
Commandant of the Marine Corps  
3000 Marine Corps, Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20350-3000

Dear General Berger:

As the Marine Corps proceeds with the execution of Force Design 2030 and considers its future amphibious ship inventory, it is critically important that Congress understands the force structure required to execute the Marine's amphibious lift requirements and meet our combatant commanders' need for Amphibious Ready Groups/Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEUs). We believe the Marine Corps must finalize the minimum requirement for its fleet of traditional amphibious warships to ensure that we can adequately resource the defense budget for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23).

We believe amphibious ships deliver a strategic value for the Marine Corps by providing crucial mobility and operational agility. We were disappointed that the Department of Defense's budget request for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) and associated shipbuilding plans did not affirm a commitment to maintaining an appropriate mix of amphibious ships. In testimony before the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces on June 17, 2021, Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Combat Development and Integration Lieutenant General Eric Smith explained the Marine Corps' requirement for a mix of 10 big deck America-class and Wasp-class amphibious assault ships, alongside 21 San Antonio-class amphibious transport docks and their Flight II variants to replace the aging Whidbey Island-class dock landing ships, for a total fleet of 31 traditional amphibious ships. He further indicated that any shipbuilding plan that does not affirm this requirement, including potential proposals to lower the inventory to 28 amphibious ships, will involve significant risk.

Even as the Marine Corps determines what amphibious fleet architecture will best support its global operations and advance important new operational concepts such as Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO), which were further emphasized by Admiral John C. Aquilino of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command during testimony before Congress on March 9, 2022, we believe the ARG/MEU consistently demonstrates the flexibility and utility it contributes to the Joint Force. We would note that during the evacuation of the Kabul airport last year, the 24<sup>th</sup> MEU provided protection for U.S. forces.

We also understand the Secretary of the Navy's Force Structure Assessment will not be completed until later this year. As Congress awaits the Secretary's Force Structure Assessment and 30-year shipbuilding plan, we believe it imperative to understand the amphibious ship requirements and associated connector strategy so that we can adequately adjudicate the Fiscal Year 2023 budget request. Therefore, we ask you to assess the minimum number of traditional amphibious ships and the associated connector strategy necessary to protect our nation's forcible entry capabilities necessary to support your Planning Guidance. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your timely feedback.

Sincerely,



---

ROBERT WITTMAN  
Member of Congress



---

MIKE GALLAGHER  
Member of Congress