

mitigate any reduction in anti-air and ballistic missile defense capabilities if the number of DDG-51 destroyers were in fact reduced from current plans. My intention is to ensure that we continue to maintain a strong Navy capable of projecting power and maintaining presence anywhere across the globe.

In January, when news began to leak that the Department's budget request would dramatically reduce procurement of DDG-51's in the 5-year budget plan, I sent a letter to Defense Secretary Esper expressing my strong objections. To date, the Navy has still not adequately justified such deep cuts in ship procurement, which would have devastating effects on our defense industrial base, including our private shipyards. This amendment and this bill will help to protect our shipbuilding industrial base, which will be essential to reach the goal of a 355-ship Navy.

This bill also includes important provisions for the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery. The NDAA authorizes \$160 million for the first phase of funding for PNSY's Multi-Mission Dry Dock No. 1 extension military construction project, which will be authorized and funded over 3 years due to its large size. This project will ensure our Nation's submarines stay well maintained and at sea for years to come.

In addition, the NDAA contains provisions I championed along with Senator SHAHEEN, which will help our PNSY firefighters develop alternative work schedules and exempt public shipyard workers from DOD's government lodging program when it would adversely affect their mission.

In further support of both our public and private shipyards, the bill also includes an amendment I authored that directs the Navy to report on its plans to prevent and mitigate the impacts of future pandemics, including at private and public shipyards, by focusing on the health and safety of the shipyard workers. Amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic, I led a number of bipartisan letters from the Maine delegation and spoke with the Secretary of the Navy to encourage the Department to do more to protect our shipyard workers' health and safety. My amendment continues that effort, and I again thank Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED for adopting it as part of their substitute amendment.

This NDAA also makes continued investments in America's air power, authorizing 95 fifth-generation Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and seven CH-53K King Stallion helicopters. The workers at Pratt & Whitney's North Berwick factory are proud of their contributions in making the F-35's top-of-line engine the best in the sky, and Hunting Dearborn in Fryberg has been making important contributions to both the F-35 and CH-53K programs for years.

The NDAA also provides important authorizations for the Maine National Guard, including a provision ensuring

that Maine Guard members who were activated to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic can receive transitional health benefits. The Maine National Guard has done a phenomenal job supporting our State during the health crisis, taking on tasks such as fit-testing healthcare workers for N95 masks, helping the Maine CDC inventory its supplies and deliver PPE and ventilators across the State, and setting up an external triage tent outside of the Togus VA Medical Center.

This bill also provides authorization for an important perimeter security construction project at the Navy's detachment in Cutler, Maine, which will ensure the security of an important installation that allows Navy commanders to communicate with U.S. and NATO ships, planes, and submarines operating in the Atlantic. This project was the Navy's No. 1 unfunded military construction priority.

There are so many other provisions of this bill that I am proud to support. Just to identify a few, the United States-Israel Security Assistance Authorization Act of 2020, which I cosponsored, was incorporated into the bill and would authorize important security assistance, energy and agricultural cooperation, and provide other authorities to support our steadfast ally Israel.

Another amendment I offered which was incorporated into the bill would require DOD to study its military requirements for negative air pressure room containment systems which are used to isolate patients with contagious illnesses, necessary equipment I believe is essential for DOD to successfully combat and contain future pandemics.

The bill also authorizes the creation of a new Pacific Deterrence Initiative to provide increased security assistance and engagement throughout the Indo-Pacific region in response to an increasingly aggressive Chinese Communist Party.

Enactment of this NDAA is vitally important for the security of our Nation, our servicemembers and their families. I look forward to the Senate's conference with the House and quickly sending the final fiscal year 2021 NDAA to the President's desk.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHELLE COOLICAN

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, today I am pleased to recognize Michelle Coolican, the Flagler County Teacher of the Year from Buddy Taylor Middle School in Palm Coast, FL.

Michelle believes the Teacher of the Year award goes beyond her personal achievement; she considers it an honor for the entire teaching profession. She credits her colleagues, the school's administration for its learning environment, and the students she works with every day for this recognition.

Superintendent Jim Tager noted Michelle's ability to connect with her students by promoting learning through community projects and classroom experiments. She enjoys making her students excited to study science, and they have learned to expect a new project each time they enter her classroom.

Michelle has taught science for 13 years at Buddy Taylor Middle School. She also serves as an adviser for the school's after-school STEM club.

I extend my best wishes to Michelle for receiving this award and look forward to hearing of her continued good work in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO LEENA HALL-YOUNG

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, today I am pleased to honor Leena Hall-Young, the Duval County Teacher of the Year at Raines High School in Jacksonville, FL.

Leena is a tenth grade language arts teacher at Raines High School where she considers her role as a teacher to be a facilitator in releasing every child's potential. Superintendent Diana Greene describes Leena as a vibrant and talented educator who has dedicated her career to her students. Leena is credited with fostering a professional learning environment for her colleagues. Under her leadership, her school has seen reading proficiency rates increase by double digits.

Leena is the chairwoman of the English language arts department and helps to create learning opportunities for her colleagues by supporting first year teachers. She also participates in Duval County's Innovative Educator Program.

I extend my best wishes and thanks to Leena for her passion as a teacher, and I look forward to learning of her continued good work.●

TRIBUTE TO SAMANTHA HOWER

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, today I have the privilege to honor Samantha Hower, the Lee County Teacher of the Year from Mariner High School in Cape Coral, FL.

Samantha is the Visual Arts Teacher at Mariner High School and has worked for 7 years in the Lee County School District. Under Samantha's leadership, the school's STEM Academy has become the STEAM Academy, with an art curriculum added to science, technology, engineering, and math. She also began the school's first National Art Honor Society and supports nearby elementary and middle school art programs.

Samantha holds that an education is able to transform a child's entire life. She urges her students to ask the question why: Why do they like something, and why do they do what they do? She does this until they begin to ask these questions themselves. When this happens, Samantha knows they have found comfort in taking risks.