

**NAVY FUNDING**

## **Congress must ensure that we have a strong Navy**

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Independence Day is a wonderful celebration of all that we enjoy as Americans, but it is also a poignant time to reflect on our relationship with the rest of the world. Resting in the heart of the United States, we here in St. Louis may sometimes feel that we are safe from the troubles of other countries. However we should not be naïve and think that we are immune to world events. During peacetime, it's our U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team that keeps us safe and responds to crises around the globe.

Events around the world show that we cannot remain isolated. Adm. Harry Harris Jr., commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, recently expressed concern regarding China "creating a great wall of sand" through land reclamation to build artificial island fortresses in contested areas of the South China Sea. China's action and its increased investment in the Chinese Navy raise serious questions about China's intentions. Russia has been slowly rebuilding its military while also implementing a more aggressive foreign policy.

St. Louis sits on one of the proudest and most important rivers in the world, and we rely on a secure and open exchange of trade. Ensuring that we have a strong U.S. Navy to support our allies in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, and keep the sea lanes open for the free flow of shipping and commerce, are among the many reasons that we need a significant investment by Congress in the Department of the Navy.

*Doyle Wilhite • Webster Groves*

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