

*WASHINGTON D.C.* – In a letter released today, U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) and U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman (ID-CT) encourage Defense Secretary Robert Gates to exercise his authority to end the F136 Alternate Engine program for the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF).

“The House and the Senate have both acted on this matter and are in agreement that the ‘extra’ engine program should be ended. Unfortunately, the ongoing budget battle is resulting in nearly a million dollars a day being wasted on this program which is now expected to be terminated,” said Larson. “As Secretary Gates himself has said, this program is ‘an unnecessary and extravagant expense’ and I hope he will now use his authority to once and for all bring it to a close so that we can put our limited resources to better use for our nation’s warfighters.”

“Now that both the House and Senate have shown that they plan to cancel the alternate engine, it is time we bring this wasteful and unnecessary program to an end,” Lieberman said. “Congressman Larson and I stand with Secretary Gates in calling for this program’s termination, and we call on the Administration to act now.”

Since 2007, Larson and Lieberman have been working with the President, the Secretary of Defense, and senior military leaders to end the duplicative alternate engine program. In 2009, the U.S. Senate, led by Lieberman, voted to prevent additional funding for the F136 engine. Last month, the House weighed in, voting to remove funding for the alternate engine from the budget. However, because work on the FY 2011 budget has not been completed, the program has been allowed to continue.

With the release of the fiscal year 2012 Defense budget, Secretary Gates said he would “look at all available legal options to close down [the Alternate Engine program].” Now that Congress has clearly spoken on the issue, Larson and Lieberman are asking Secretary Gates to use his authority to follow through on his commitment.

The full letter is below:

Dear Secretary Gates,

We write in strong support of your continued effort to end the F136 Alternate Engine program for the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). As you have said throughout your tenure with the Department of Defense, this program represents “an unnecessary and extravagant expense” that must be eliminated if we are to properly fund our nation’s warfighters. We couldn’t agree more, and it is with this sentiment that we respectfully request that you to take the necessary action to end this program at the conclusion of the current continuing resolution.

As you know, in 2009 during debate on the FY10 National Defense Authorization Act, the Senate voted 59-38 in opposition to adding funding for the JSF Alternate Engine program. Subsequent to this vote, the Senate has not included funds for the extra engine in either the defense authorization or appropriations bills. In fact, on February 18, 2011, Senator Carl Levin, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee stated in reference to funding the Alternate Engine program, that he, “doubt[s] very much [the Senate] will do it this year.”

The comments by Chairman Levin came just days after action by the House of Representatives to terminate the Alternate Engine program. On February 16, 2011, the House approved by a vote of 233-198 an amendment offered by Representative Tom Rooney that struck all funding for the Alternate Engine program from the proposed Department of Defense Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2011. This action puts the House on the record as opposing all funding for the Alternate Engine program through the remainder of fiscal year 2011, and should provide you with the flexibility to terminate funding for the program at the end of the current continuing resolution.

With the release of the fiscal year 2012 Defense budget you stated, “I will look at all available legal options to close down [the Alternate Engine program].” We appreciate your strong position on this matter and hope that later this week you will be allowed to follow through on your commitment to end the program. The House and Senate have both spoken on this matter. It is time that we stop wasting nearly \$1 million per day to continue a program that will surely be terminated.

Thank you again for the continued leadership you provide our nation’s Armed Forces. We look forward to your prompt response on this matter.

