TAXPAYERS PROTECTION ALLIANCE

May 23, 2022

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear lawmakers,

On behalf of millions of taxpayers and consumers, the Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) urges you to vote against any Defense spending bill that authorizes funding for a second F-35 engine. The F-35 program is already a boondoggle. The F-35 program is expected to cost more than $1.25 trillion over fleet service life, or more than $3,500 for every man, woman, and child living in the United States. And now, the Pentagon expects lawmakers to fork over an additional $273 million for the Advanced Engine Transition Program (AETP) to install "next-generation" engines into already-overpriced F-35s. Instead of enabling ever-increasing Pentagon budgets, Congress must demand accountability and get military spending under control.

Unfortunately, the $273 million AETP cost included in the fiscal year (FY) 2023 budget request is only the tip of the iceberg. According to Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall, "There's a [more than] $6 billion development cost associated with getting that engine completely developed and into production... We're funding the development this year, the next increment, but it's going to have to compete in our budget for those resources going forward."

Despite this incredibly costly endeavor, the proposed new engine for the F-35 would not even work across all branches of the military.

The Navy has warned that they would only be able to use the new engine if it were heavily modified. The engine or the C-model's carrier arrestor would likely have to undergo significant changes, which is hardly a practical endeavor given the AETP's already-long development timeline. In addition, F-35 Program Executive Officer Lt. Gen. Eric T. Fick remarked to reporters that AETP engines are "completely a non-starter" for the Marine Corps F-35B. As a result, an already-prohibitively expensive engine would become even costlier as different branches of the military struggle with heavily modified derivative products.

This is not the first time that lawmakers have considered a second engine for the F-35. During the debate over the FY 2011 Defense Appropriations Bill, special interests attempted to insert billions of dollars' worth of funding for an F136 despite the objections of experienced military personnel such as then-Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz. Fortunately, lawmakers recognized the measure as thinly veiled corporate welfare and then-President Obama wisely threatened to veto the spending bill if it contained the F136 funding provision.

Despite these noble efforts, a familiar cast of characters are once again pushing for an unneeded second engine for the F-35. And, unless lawmakers once again push back on these misguided provisions, taxpayers will be stuck with endless development and modification costs at a time of record federal spending and inflation. We urge you to vote against any legislation funding these engine efforts and examine ways to sustainably reduce the Pentagon budget.

Sincerely,

David Williams
President

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