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DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

October 18, 2016

The Honorable Dennis V. McGinn
Assistant Secretary of the Navy
Energy, Installations and Environment
1000 Navy Pentagon
Room 4D 684
Washington DC, 20350 -1000

Dear Assistant Secretary McGinn:

I am writing to request a meeting with you to discuss the plans to expand the rental of public private venture (PPV) housing at Naval Weapons Station Earle to non-Department of Defense-affiliated civilians. The proposal is fraught with security concerns, as well serious challenges to local systems, and it is in fact *deja vu* all over again—despite the fact that security at our bases has proven to be even more challenging in the last several years.

By way of background, you may know that it was less than ten years ago that the Navy first sought to open Laurelwood housing units at Earle to the general public because of excess capacity. The proposal launched a four-year confrontation with the local community that was deeply divisive. It was expressed then—a belief still valid today—that a plan to allow base access for any individual with a rent check raised serious security concerns, but also would have negatively impacted local transportation infrastructure, schools and the environment. After an outpouring of concern among local leaders and community grassroots organizations, the Navy reached a settlement with the developer to purchase and demolish the surplus housing in 2010.

The current agreement, which opens dozens of housing units to non-affiliated renters, raises nearly identical questions of how rental applicants will be—or even *can be*—properly vetted so that the munitions station—as well as its neighboring communities—are protected and secure. I understand that only 81 percent of these homes have been occupied in the last six years. As a result, housing partner Northeast Housing LLC, a wholly-owned corporation of Balfour Beatty Communities (BBC), has recently ramped up efforts to attract non-affiliated civilians to occupy the remaining approximately 20 housing units.

Given that our nation has been exposed to numerous national security threats on the homeland since the original signing of the PPV lease—including the planned attack by the Fort Dix Five—it is evident that this type of housing venture is no longer practical and in fact a

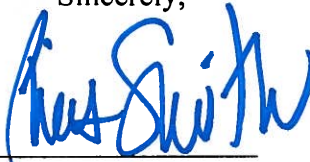


security risk here at Earle. Furthermore, recent terrorist activity and bombings just miles from NWS Earle demonstrate that security is indeed of paramount concern in this suburban and rural area.

I urge you and your team to revisit the plan to open the housing on the base and work with me and other local officials with the hope of finding an alternative solution that enables the Navy to meet its obligation to BBC without threatening the safety of the base, our military personnel and the surrounding area. Additionally, I hope you will partner with me to determine why more affiliated personnel are not taking advantage of the vacant homes on the installation, and work to make the base housing and installation environment more competitive.

Thank you for your time and attention to this request and I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Christopher H. Smith
MEMBER OF CONGRESS