



U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Proud and inspired by USS New Hampshire

Cmdr. Sean D. Fujimoto, and many crew members praised the excellence of teams from our shipyard who keep the New Hampshire and every other Virginia Class sub in peak condition.

As a senior member of the Senate's Armed Services Committee, I have been a strong supporter of the Virginia Class submarine program, and successfully fought to reverse cuts to the program in 2012. These remarkable boats are equipped for a full array of 21st century military missions. They are designed to enter coastal waters unseen for covert intelligence gathering, surveillance, and reconnaissance. They can insert and recover special operations forces for secret ground missions. In counter-terrorism missions, they can launch pinpoint conventional strikes on land targets using Tomahawk cruise missiles. And, of course, they also perform traditional missions such as anti-submarine, anti-surface ship, and mine warfare.

Virginia Class subs perform their missions out of sight, cloaked by stealth technology, submerged for months at a time if necessary. Potential adversaries hope to counter US superiority in surface warships by overwhelming them with thousands of anti-ship missiles or swarms of fast-attack boats. But there is no effective defense against Virginia Class subs. That's why many military strategists believe that submarines will define future naval warfare in the same way that battleships and aircraft carriers dominated 20th century naval combat.

In an era of tight Pentagon budgets, Virginia Class subs offer the Navy more capabilities at lower costs. The newest boats — less than half the cost of Cold War-era Seawolf subs — are designed and built on the principles of "FIRE" — fast, inexpensive, restrained, and elegant. The

New Hampshire was delivered months ahead of schedule and well under budget.

It has been said that building a Virginia Class submarine is more akin to making a spacecraft than a typical warship. Cmdr. Fujimoto and his crew of nearly 130 work as an elite, seamless team to operate and maintain every system and piece of technology on board. To earn the right to wear the coveted "dolphin" submarine warfare insignia, crew members spend nearly a year in rigorous training to learn how everything on the ship works and how to respond in emergencies. When I asked a senior officer on the New Hampshire a technical question about the ballast system, he used it as an opportunity to demonstrate the crew's expertise; he turned to a cook, who promptly gave the correct answer.

In budget battles that lie ahead in Washington, I am determined to defend both the Virginia Class submarine program and the award-winning Portsmouth Naval Shipyard that keeps these vessels in fighting form. I will oppose the deep, indiscriminate cuts to these critical national security programs that would result from so-called budget "sequestration" in coming years.

America's submarine fleet is called the Silent Service, quietly keeping the peace — and ready, if necessary, to fight and win at war. Most Americans will never see one of these magnificent Virginia Class submarines, though Granite Staters might catch a glimpse of one at the Portsmouth shipyard. But the superb professionals who design, build, maintain, and serve on the New Hampshire and her sister subs deserve our respect and gratitude.

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By U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen

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Opinion Page

Two weeks ago, diving deep in the Atlantic aboard the nuclear-powered attack submarine USS New Hampshire, I witnessed firsthand how the United States Navy — more powerful than all other navies combined — dominates the world's oceans. And I better understood why stealthy, lethal, multi-mission Virginia Class subs will be at the heart of US military strategy for decades to come.

Granite Staters can take special pride in the New Hampshire, nicknamed the Granite Ghost. When I introduced myself to a sailor as Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, he said "welcome home." Our state's motto, "Live Free or Die," is also the ship's motto, proudly displayed on sailors' gear. The boat's sponsor, Cheryl McGuinness of Portsmouth, commissioned it at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in 2008; her initials are welded on a hull plate in the mess hall. In the course of the day, the commanding officer,