

General Letter to Politician or Editor Instructions:

The letter should have the following segments:

1. Name and address of elected representative
2. Date
3. Salutation
4. Paragraph 1: statement of opposition and summary of arguments against the F35A
5. Paragraph 2. Statement and support from the talking points about supposed economic benefits
6. Paragraph 3. Statement and support from talking points about negative economic impacts on community. If the letter writer will be personally affected, this is where that should be discussed.
7. Paragraph 4. Statement and support about the poor process that went into application (math errors, etc) and/or lack of communication/concern from politicians and/or Guard from talking points.
8. Summary paragraph listing reasons for opposition. If the letter is to politicians, should also make specific request to reverse position and/or be better on process.

The following is an example letter:

Senator Patrick Leahy [Change address block if addressed to Sanders or Welch]
433 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

[Put in date]

Dear Senator Leahy [or Sanders or Congressman Welch],

I am writing to you to express my deep concerns regarding the potential basing of the F-35A at the Burlington Air Guard Station in Vermont. I believe that the purported benefits of the F35A being based here have been exaggerated, while the problems it will bring have been underestimated and in some cases, ignored altogether. I am also deeply concerned that the Vermont Congressional delegation has not been willing to engage in a full and open dialogue with the residents of the areas, primarily in Winooski and South Burlington, most directly affected by the projected flight path of the F35As.

The Air National Guard and your office have claimed that the F35A basing is necessary for the Guard and economically beneficial to the community. However, we have seen no evidence that the Guard would be unable to be given another mission if another base were chosen for this one. And according to the Air Force's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the economic gain from jobs would be limited. Under Scenario 1 (1 to 1 replacement of 18 F-35A's for the current F-16's) there would be no increase in jobs. Even under Scenario 2 the Air Force has stated there would be only "minor" economic effect from the 266 additional military personnel (83 full-time and 183 part-time), with all the full-time personnel transferred from other bases outside Vermont.

Although I am unconvinced of the economic benefit to the community and to the Guard, I am very worried about the economic cost to local communities within the noise contour of the F35A flight path. losses in property value and difficulty re-selling their property. According to the Air Force's DEIS, "Areas exposed to DNL above 65 dB are generally not considered suitable for residential use." Numerous federal agencies (HUD, FAA and VA) all recommend written disclosures to prospective buyers or lessees of property within this noise area, and properties in noise areas over 65 dB DNL may not be eligible for federally guaranteed loans, program assistance, subsidy or insurance. The Air Force DEIS cites two studies, one of which shows a 1.8 to 2.3 percent decrease in property values per dB, and a second showing 0.5 to 2 percent decrease per dB.

Finally, as a citizen of the state of Vermont, I would like to register my concern for the way in which the conversation has been conducted between our Congressional Delegation, the Air National Guard, and citizens of the affected communities. Citizens of the community have requested, but been denied, direct meetings with our elected representatives, as well as assistance in accessing what should be legally-available documents.

Given the low likelihood of significant economic benefit to the Burlington community and the Air National Guard, the high likelihood of negative economic impact to citizens living in the noise contour, and the questionable processes and communication that have happened so far around the basing application, I would like to ask you to reverse your support for basing the F35A in Burlington. At a minimum, I ask that you work to make all the information asked for by citizens of South Burlington and Winooski accessible to them, and that you agree to meet directly with representatives of these communities. I look forward to hearing your response to these requests.

Sincerely,