

July 12, 2022

Dear Representatives and Senators,

We, the undersigned organizations representing taxpayers across the nation, urge you to proceed with extreme caution when considering proposals to spend more money on the F-35 engine. The F-35 program as a whole has already cost American taxpayers an exorbitant amount. It is vital that time and care be taken before making decisions that could add considerably to the bill.

Over the service life of the fleet, the F-35 program is projected to cost the American people \$1.7 trillion. This is roughly \$5,000 for every man, woman, and child in the nation. Given the rampant government spending we have seen in the last few years, the record inflation that has followed, and the prospects for higher debt, it is critical that every additional dollar of federal expenditure be absolutely necessary.

Unfortunately, some inside and outside of government are asking taxpayers to pay another \$503 million in the FY23 NDAA for an “Adaptive Engine Transition Program” (AETP) to install new engines into the already-overpriced F-35. The Air Force Secretary’s office recently anticipated a price tag of over \$6 billion to get these new engines into production.

There may also be a number of unforeseen costs to AETP because of the inability of this proposed new engine in its current envisioned forms to work across all versions of the F-35.

The Navy has warned it will not be able to use either of the competing versions of the engine being developed under AETP. This would either necessitate further changes to the AETP or costly changes to existing naval equipment in the future. Either setback would extend the already-lengthy development timeline for the F-35 and add more costs to the backs of American taxpayers.

This will not be the first time lawmakers have had to consider a second engine for the F-35. During the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) process, some lobbied to have billions added for the F136 engine. Thankfully, experienced military personnel like General Norton Schwartz raised objections, and lawmakers then correctly recognized this proposal as the wasteful and hasty.

The proposal has reared its head once again, though in different form. Nonetheless, without the same discernment and due diligence from Congress, American taxpayers will be forced to bear the burden of seemingly unending development and modification costs for the F-35.

The history of the F-35 is riddled with examples of wasteful spending across numerous designs, redesigns, contractors, and procurement strategies that began with high hopes for better fiscal discipline and capability – only to prove underwhelming to taxpayers. This is why it is vitally important that Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Government

Accountability Office study any and all options for the F-35 engine – and compare and contrast the costs and benefits of each option – before proceeding. Any new developments to this program must only be made with greater certainty that there will be no further waste.

It is for these reasons – among many others – that we, the undersigned organizations, ask you to carefully study the proposals and refuse to authorize any further expenditure that creates unnecessary costs for the American people. Given record levels of spending and inflation, this is the time our nation can least afford it.

Sincerely,

Taxpayers Protection Alliance

National Taxpayers Union

Americans for Tax Reform

Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

Progressive Democrats of America

Project on Government Oversight

Quincy Institute

Women's Action for New Directions

60 Plus Association