

An Open Letter to Senator Tammy Baldwin



Courtesy of Clare Norelle.

Please save our children!

We, the undersigned, are your constituents and loyal supporters. We have contributed generously to your electoral campaigns over the years. We are reaching out to you at this time because we are concerned that you are making a grievous mistake in your support of the proposed basing of F-35 first strike fighter jets in Madison.

We feel strongly that this decision will ultimately not serve you or your constituents well. In fact, we fear it will come back to haunt your legacy and career.

You earned our loyal support because we believe you shared our values and could best represent them in the halls of government. These values include a commitment to social and environmental justice, racial equity, peace, and care for the natural world. The F-35 project represents an assault on all these values and aspirations.

The F-35s present myriad health and welfare threats to Madison residents. By the Air Force's own assessment, locating the nuclear capable F-35 fighter jets at Truax Field will "disproportionately impact low-income communities, people of color and children" who live, work, play and attend schools in the Truax area.

There are over 35 public and private schools and daycare centers within two miles of the proposed F-35 air base. A growing body of research reveals the adverse health effects of noise on children. Concentration, attention span, speech development, long-term memory, reading and comprehension skills, and mental health are all negatively impacted by the high decibel noise of military jets.

According to a 2018 study by the City of Madison, kids in the Truax area are already struggling even before they start school, with only 48 percent considered "kindergarten ready." One of the schools destined to suffer the worst noise impacts is Hawthorne Elementary, where most children are low-income and of color. In a city struggling to overcome persistent racial disparities, flying painfully loud fighter jets over elementary schools will further burden and disadvantage children near Truax.

The economic benefits you have been touting are not real. Over 90% of the jobs "created" by the F-35s are federally funded and come out of our tax dollars. Loss of the F-35s will NOT impact jobs at the commercial airport. Even worse, the Air Force itself anticipates the noise from the F35s will make 1,185 homes near Truax Field "incompatible for residential use." All properties near the airport will lose value.

The F-35s will not keep us safe. These jets are designed to carry nuclear bombs. The Air Force has said the bombs will not be stored in Madison but they also said that in the past when they indeed stored nuclear bombs here to be used on the F-89. Contrary to what you have told many of your constituents, these nuclear weapons of mass destruction have no capacity to make us safe or secure. Instead, they will make our state a target in the event of nuclear hostilities.

The F-35 is the most expensive weapon system in human history. It is considered an embarrassing boondoggle by many legislators, military leaders and government watchdogs. In January of 2021, the Acting Secretary of Defense said "We have created a monster" and used an expletive to describe it. Two months later, Adam Smith, Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, called it a "rathole." When the late Senator John McCain chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee, he said the F-35 was "both a scandal and a tragedy with respect to cost, schedule and performance." The Project on Government Oversight (POGO) released a detailed report this March that concluded: "More than twenty years into the F-35's development, the aircraft remains in every practical and legal sense nothing more than a very expensive prototype."

Senator Baldwin, we ask you at this time to reconsider your decision to foist this dangerous, wasteful and unnecessary prototype on your constituents in Madison and Wisconsin. There are many more beneficial ways to invest public funds

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The F-35s will continue to contaminate the environment with air pollution and toxic PFAS chemicals. PFAS is already poisoning Madison's watershed and drinking water, traveling down Starkweather Creek to Lake Monona and into our chain of lakes. PFAS causes a myriad of health problems: decreasing fertility, high blood pressure, and child development problems including low birth weight, bone variations, and behavioral changes. It also increases the risk of prostate, kidney and testicular cancer.

Sincerely,

Barbara Arnold, Madison - Bob Beck, Madison - Lori. S Bennett, Madison - Barbara Benson & Pat O'Laughlin, Madison - Tom Bernthal, Madison - Phil Blank, Milwaukee - Ann Boyer, Madison - Sue Bridson, Madison John & Jan Carroll, Milwaukee - Atty. Carl J. & Catherine Crow Rasmussen, Madison - Laura Chern, Madison Robert Cohen, Madison - Susan Curtis, Madison - Atty. David De Bruin, Milwaukee - Neil Deupree, Janesville Julie Ann Dolinky, Milwaukee - Heather Driscoll, Madison - Atty. Sandra Edhlund & Atty. Art Heitzer, Milwaukee - Frank Emspak, Madison - Clyde Filas-Mortensen, Madison - Rev. Jerry & Kathryn Folk, Madison Tom Garver, Madison - Jane Kavaloski, Madison - Susan Kaye, Madison - Atty. John Laun, Middleton Barbara Leigh, Ph.D., Milwaukee - Julie Melton, Madison - Dean Mueller, Milwaukee - Paul Nannis, Milwaukee James Penczykowski & Patty LaCrosse, Madison - Paul & Ellen Reckwerdt, Madison Juliana Shaull & Eric Howland, Madison - Chuck Shobert & Julia Isaacs, Madison Mark Shults & Nancy Vedder-Shults, Madison - Kristi Siefert & Peter Berryman, Madison - Patricia J. Smith, Madison - Rev. Fred Trost & Louise Herrman Trost, Sheboygan - Elizabeth Tuttle, Madison
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such as support for veterans, health care, education, enhancing infrastructure and cyber security, and creating jobs in the clean energy sector.

We need a new mission for the Wisconsin Air National Guard that benefits our community, not one that makes it unsafe and unhealthy. We ask you to help us find a mission other than training of fighter jet pilots.

Please withdraw your support of the F-35 basing project now so that we can continue, in good conscience, to offer our support to you as our representative in Congress.