



## 2017 Navy League/Halsey Family Foundation Youth Scholarship

### Winning Essay

#### “The Impact on the Sea Services over the Next Four Years with the President and the Majority in Both Houses of Congress Being of the Same Party”

By Grayson Roach

After a long sometimes brutal campaign year, the American people elected a Republican president and decided the 115th Congress will have a Republican majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. One might expect this would ensure the priorities of the Republican Party, typically defense, healthcare reform, and infrastructure, would be advanced rather easily, but this may not be the case.

President George Washington said, “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.” The Republican Party has a similar thought to be “the party of peace through strength.” They believe the United States holds a natural position as the world leader and that injustices throughout the world will be defeated by a strong America, backed up by a strong US military. The Republican Party website states “the Republican Party is committed to rebuilding the US military into the strongest on earth, with vast superiority over any other nation or group of nations in the world.” President Trump plans to seek what he is calling a “historic” \$54 billion increase in defense spending in his 2018 budget. Updating our aging naval ships and increasing fleet size is one of the main focuses. Given the Republican desire for military superiority and the president’s goal of increasing the size of the Navy from approximately 275 to 350 ships, I believe the Republican Congress and president will have a significant impact on the US Navy over the next four years.

The biggest hurdle in getting the budget approved is sequestration. Sequestration is a provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 that imposes across-the-board spending cuts aimed at reducing the budget deficit. It requires \$1.2 trillion in cuts across federal agencies including \$500 million to the military over the next decade. Sequestration will be in effect through 2021. It has been estimated that building a fleet of 350 ships would add an additional \$25 billion per year to the existing budget or approximately 60 percent more than the amount of funding the Navy has received on average for shipbuilding over the past thirty years.

There are many advantages to increasing the number of ships, planes, and submarines in the Navy. The president wants to be a job creator and put America first and a budget increase could

help boost the US economy in a variety of ways. First, jobs will be created at the shipyard and in the Navy. The shipyards will have to hire additional personnel with the skills to build ships. The Navy will have to recruit personnel to man the ships. Since it takes time to train the workers and sailors, these people will have to be hired in advance of the ship building efforts. The shipyards spend money to buy the equipment and upgrade machinery to support the increased ship building efforts. They will also have to purchase the raw materials necessary to build our ships. If the Congress directs the shipyards to “buy American” this would also be an additional improvement to our economy.

One concern is the cost to the tax payer. If the President and Congress implement aggressive tax cuts, as he promised during his campaign, the cost of the increased ship building could cause the Congress to offset the increase in shipbuilding funds by taking the money from other areas of the Navy’s budget. This could result in cutting the operating and maintenance budget. It could also result in the cutting of programs designed to help Navy families. This could have a significant negative impact on the ability of the fleet to respond to crises, to win wars, and to keep the seas safe.

This president has big dreams for the military. But due to sequestration, it may be hard to get his budget approved. One thing is certain, even though Republicans are in the majority, help from the Democrats will be needed to get the budget approved. Republicans tend to be pro-military but they are also the party of fiscal responsibility. With this in mind, overturning sequestration and getting the budget approved will be a challenge.