

By U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney
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With our country facing a budget deficit of more than \$1 trillion, spending every taxpayer dollar wisely has never been more critical, but congressional earmarks in the Pentagon's budget have led to unnecessary, duplicative programs.

For example, the Department of Defense is overseeing development of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which will replace many of our military's aging aircraft. While the F-35 has experienced success during flight testing with its engine made by Pratt & Whitney, Congress continues to earmark money year after year for a second, "alternate" engine made by General Electric and Rolls-Royce. This extra engine is far behind in its development, and would cost another \$3 billion to bring it to completion.

Most military aircraft rely on one engine, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates has repeatedly stated that he opposes a second engine for the F-35. Air Force Lt. Gen. Mark Shackelford and Maj. Gen. Johnny Weida said the alternate engine is "... unnecessary, too costly and risks diverting resources from production."

Marine Corps Brig. Gen. David Heinz stated that funding the alternate engine project would "take 50 to 80 tails out of the program." Spending billions on a duplicative program would widen America's jet fighter gap and jeopardize our national security.

Pratt & Whitney, which earned the contract to manufacture the F-35 engine through competitive bidding, maintains its primary testing facility in Palm Beach County. On the other hand, British media reports assert that funding the extra engine, which is manufactured in the United Kingdom by Rolls-Royce, would secure hundreds of jobs in the U.K. With unemployment hovering around 10 percent nationally, and higher in Florida, we should not spend taxpayer dollars to export jobs.

Funding the extra engine does not efficiently use our defense budget to best serve our men and women in uniform. The extra engine will not make our country any safer, but it will take limited

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resources away from our troops.

Unfortunately, the House Armed Services Committee included funding for the extra engine in the defense budget it approved last week. When the House of Representatives debates this issue on the floor this week, I will sponsor a bipartisan amendment to end funding for the extra engine. I hope colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in striking this wasteful program.