

**NEWS RELEASE,** May 4, 2016 Page 1 of 2

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**Congressman Rick Larsen and Navy Proposals for Growing Jet Noise Problem Draw Criticism**

Congressman Rick Larsen and the Navy are being criticized for failing to address the growing problem of harmful noise from controversial EA-18G ‘Growlers,’ the loudest jets ever to fly. The Navy Growlers have become the source of noise complaints throughout Puget Sound region.

Growler’s, all based at Whidbey Naval Air Station, practice low level training operations that saturate homes, business, and recreational areas with documented levels of hazardous noise. Growler noise, recognized as hazardous by the Navy’s own standards, has created what one health professional labeled, “a public health emergency” in central Whidbey Island.

Congressman Larsen, who takes much of the credit for bringing the Growlers to the region, has been accused by citizen groups of ignoring their concerns and blindly supporting the Navy’s harmful operations.

Larsen, a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, announced on April 27 that he worked to include language in the National Defense Authorization Act that would “increase automation in carrier landings to safely ease the amount of training pilots need.”

“Larsen’s ‘long term plan’ to address community concerns ignores the cause and the seriousness of the Growler problem,” said Ken Pickard, President of Citizens of Ebey’s Reserve (COER). The following “mitigations” being proposed by Larsen and the Navy (in italics) include:

* *Reducing the time that landing gear are lowered in flight.* FACT: Growler’s in flight with landing gear raised still create harmful noise that drives people out of homes and recreational areas.
* *Building a Growler “Hush House” to reduce noise from engine tests and “run-ups.”* FACT: Hush houses do nothing to reduce noise from jets in flight. According to Navy personnel, a Growler Hush Houses would only hushabout 120 operations out of 76,000 operations at Whidbey Island’s Naval Air Station.
* *Less use of afterburners that boost power and increase noise.* Afterburner use is part of the pilot training program. Growlers generate harmful noise - even when after burners are not in use.
* *Conduct noise monitoring on the San Juans as part of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the Growlers.* FACT: Studying noise doesn’t reduce it. The required study is supposed to be done before the noise and harms occur. Larsen refuses to call for a halt to Growler operations until the Environmental Impact Study is complete.
* *Increased use of flight simulators.* FACT: There is nothing to indicate that simulator use, at some unidentified future date, will replace real time Growler training. The Navy maintains that real time training is essential.
* *Development of new technology, such as Chevrons (mufflers) to cut Growlers noise.* FACT: Such changes, if they were to take place, would be far into the future. This option was previously considered by the Navy and would only reduce noise by 2.5 to 3 decibels at a high financial cost.

“Larsen’s non-solutions are meant to appease citizens more than they are to address the problem,” said Pickard. “Growlers, which the Navy’s own auditors found to have been designed with no consideration of noise impacts to servicemen or civilians, will continue to harm the people and the environment the Navy is supposed to protect.”

The same Growlers also practice electromagnetic warfare training over the Olympic Peninsula and Olympic National Park and Forest.  "Larsen's proposals do nothing to alleviate the multitude of problems and harm to people and wildlife that this causes," said Ron Richards, Chair of Save the Olympic Peninsula.

Larsen’s and the Navy’s proposals come at a time when resolutions addressing the problem are being considered throughout the region. Larsen’s proposals set the bar low enough for the Navy and its Growlers to “hop, skip and jump over” according to COER. COER and other organizations maintain that the Puget Sound is not the place for Growler operations, especially when other far more reasonable locations are available.

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Citizens of Ebey’s Reserve [**http://citizensofebeysreserve.com**](http://citizensofebeysreserve.com).

Save The Olympic Peninsula savetheolympicpeninsula.org