

Securing F-35s at Luke important to state

With the recent announcement that Luke Air Force Base is one of five bases being considered by the Air Force to receive the new F-35 training mission, now is the time for all Arizonans to get involved to bring this critically important mission to our state.

The F-35 represents the ultimate in high-tech military planes and will be far and away the world's most advanced multirole

OUR TURN

fighter. Our nation has a lot invested in the F-35 as different versions of the jet will replace aging fighter inventories in not only the Air Force, but the Navy and Marine Corps as well.

Securing the F-35 will not only maintain Luke's status as the Air Force's premier training base for fighter pilots, but the mission also will elevate the presence of one of our nation's top industries right here in our state. Arizona's \$9 billion military industry is one of the largest economic



ELAINE SCRUGGS

engines in the state, and Luke alone generates more than \$2 billion of that economic impact annually.

The F-35 mission will bring with it decades of sustainable economic benefits and an immediate infusion of \$150 million in construction-related projects. It also will generate additional employment, wages, consumer spending and investments throughout the region and state.



CHARLEY FREERICKS

With all the budget cuts that have already been made — and must continue to be made — by our governor and state Legislature, the fiscal impact of Arizona's military installations to our state should not be taken lightly.

For all these reasons and more, we have developed the statewide initiative

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called Luke Forward to raise awareness of the vital role Luke Air Force Base plays in our nation's defense and our state's economy. And, by providing Luke supporters an opportunity to show their support of the F-35, Luke Forward is sending a clear message to the Department of Defense that Arizona supports Luke continuing to be our country's premier fighter-pilot training facility.

The response to our campaign has been overwhelming. We had set a goal of having 5,000 registered supporters on our Web site by the end of the year, and currently we have more than 10,000 supporters from all over the

state! But we are not done.

We must continue these efforts as it's anticipated the Air Force will begin its analysis (referred to as the Environmental Impact Statement process) on all the candidate bases next month. In addition to evaluating all the bases on established criteria, such as training ranges and infrastructure, the Air Force will hold public "scoping" meetings to receive input from citizens.

Thus, the time has come for all Arizonans to unite, register their support at LukeForward.com and attend these meetings so we can send a powerful message to Washington, D.C., that there is overwhelming support for the F-35 training mission at Luke. Please join us in this effort right now to help both our national defense and security and our state's economy.

Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs and Charley Freericks, Fighter Country Partnership chairman, are co-chairs of the Luke Forward campaign.

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