

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
BUDGET  
ENVIRONMENT AND  
PUBLIC WORKS  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
RULES AND  
ADMINISTRATION

June 16, 2025

The Honorable Phillip Swagel  
Director, Congressional Budget Office  
Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Swagel:

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan launched the Strategic Defense Initiative—a sweeping effort to shield the United States from nuclear attack using space- and land-based technologies. Despite years of effort and billions of taxpayer dollars spent, the program collapsed under its own weight—technologically unworkable, strategically destabilizing, and fiscally unsustainable. Today, the Department of Defense is again pursuing an extraordinarily ambitious vision of national missile defense, and the risks of repeating history are real.

Under a January 27, 2025 Executive Order, the Pentagon has been directed to develop and deploy a next-generation missile defense shield—dubbed “Golden Dome”—intended to protect the U.S. homeland against any foreign aerial attack, including ballistic missiles, hypersonic weapons, advanced cruise missiles, and other next-generation threats. This plan represents a fundamental shift in U.S. policy by explicitly aiming to counter the strategic nuclear forces of Russia and China.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on the Budget, I request that CBO provide a detailed cost estimate of this effort—including the interceptors, sensors, and command, control, and communication systems that would be required across land, sea, air, and space domains. I also ask CBO to evaluate the potential strategic consequences: how adversaries may respond, the likelihood of an arms race, and the additional costs the United States might face if it seeks to sustain such a system’s effectiveness in light of foreign countermeasures or strategic force expansion.

Given the sweeping scope and strategic risks involved, I request that this analysis be completed by spring 2026 to inform consideration of the FY2027 budget. Please contact my staff with any questions or to provide an interim update, if available.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator