

# The Times Record

## OPINION

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### EDITORIALS

## DD-X decision disappointing

And the winner is ... not Bath Iron Works.

No doubt workers and officials at the shipyard are keenly disappointed with the news that the Defense Department has awarded the lead design contract for the next generation of warships to a team headed by Northrop Grumman's Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Miss., instead of a team headed by General Dynamics and Bath Iron Works. The contract is worth \$2.9 billion over three years.

At a meeting with The Times Record editorial board Monday, Rep. Tom Allen, D-Maine, was hopeful BIW would be chosen. He believes Navy warships are "an important piece" of the U.S. defense and "a needed presence around the globe." "Most often, in a crisis the first presence on the scene is the U.S. Navy," he said.

Fortunately, the design contract award is not a winner-take-all situation. In a press release following the announcement last night, Allen had these words of encouragement:

"The design proposal developed by BIW and the other members of General Dynamics-led team, after many years of dedicated effort, was outstanding. It is important to emphasize that BIW will still have an important role to play in the upcoming design process, and that the Navy remains committed to an even division of construction work on this next generation of surface combatants between BIW and Ingalls."

Allen told The Times Record that he is concerned, however, that the Bush administration's shipbuilding schedule is "so much lower" than that of the Clinton administration. "We're losing ground compared to missile defense and other military priorities," he said.

Construction on the DD-X series of warships is scheduled to begin in 2005, but the Navy has not decided whether BIW or Ingalls will build the first of the new high-tech warships. What we do know is that the Navy has a proven and vested interest in keeping both shipyards viable. That is some consolation.