

Last week, EADS North America announced it would re-enter the competition to manufacture the U.S. Air Force's next generation aerial refueling tanker, known generically as the KC-X. That news was widely welcomed throughout South Alabama where thousands of local workers will help build the new aircraft if EADS wins the government contract.

I am joining Senators Sessions and Shelby and local and state leaders in fully supporting EADS' latest efforts to produce in Mobile the most advanced and mission-capable tanker possible for the U.S. military.

EADS' presence in the KC-X competition is exciting on many fronts. From the perspective of the military, the possibility of EADS' advanced tanker in the competition means that the Pentagon will have the ability to select the absolute best aircraft to meet the challenging global mission requirements of our fighting forces.

From the view of the American taxpayer, EADS' entrance will present the opportunity for the highest value through a rigorous competition. The taxpayer loses when the government does not have a choice of bidders in any contract, let alone the KC-X, which is worth up to \$40 billion. The Obama administration also made clear early on that the federal government should avoid sole-source contracting.

For South Alabama, the announcement keeps alive the Mobile area's long-planned role in the construction of the new tanker. We will once again have the opportunity to demonstrate that our partnership with EADS can produce the winning tanker.

Furthermore, that partnership will result in the creation of thousands of local jobs - not only to build the new Air Force tanker should EADS be ultimately selected by the Pentagon - but also to construct commercial A330 air freighters. Nationally, tens of thousands of new jobs would also be generated if EADS wins the tanker competition.

No one is wearing rose colored glasses, however. We all know from recent experience this will be a hard-fought contest against a jealous competitor that has thrown everything at us, even going so far as to insult our Alabama workforce in the past competition.

We also remember it was not the Boeing tanker design that won the last competition, but rather the EADS KC-45. Unlike the Boeing tanker design, the KC-45 aircraft is real - it doesn't solely exist as an artistic concept. The basic KC-45 has already been built and tested by our allies.

It's exciting to have EADS back in the competition and South Alabama back in hunt for these new jobs.

### **Unemployment Dips Slightly:**

The latest Alabama unemployment numbers show the jobless rate dipped slightly last month. Overall, the state unemployment rate dropped from 11.1 percent in February, to 11 percent in March. Baldwin, Clarke, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe and Washington counties each experienced small reductions in local unemployment. However, the jobless rates remain much too high -

ranging from 20.4 percent in Monroe, to 10.4 percent in Baldwin.

This is far short of the eight percent unemployment rate that President Obama promised with the passage of his economic stimulus bill over a year ago. Despite the failed stimulus and a national unemployment rate hovering at ten percent, I am continuing to work with local officials to help bring jobs to our region, including efforts to support EADS' bid to produce the KC-45 tanker.

**"National Day of Prayer" Not Unconstitutional:**

The tradition of declaring national days of prayer runs deep in America's heritage – bringing our nation together during times of war and thanksgiving.

It was, therefore, shocking that a federal district court judge in Wisconsin recently ruled that the National Day of Prayer, celebrated each May by federal law, is unconstitutional. This is yet another unwarranted attack on America's freedoms by judicial activists.

In 1952, President Harry Truman, signed a law directing a "suitable day each year" be set aside as a national day of prayer. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation into law directing the first Thursday in May as a "National Day of Prayer."

Under the law, no one is forced to pray, nor is any religion promoted. U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb's ruling is unfortunate and simply wrong.

To stop this outrageous judicial overreaching, I am cosponsoring legislation introduced by Congressman Lamar Smith, R-TX, to affirm the constitutionality of the National Day of Prayer.

Federal judges need to know that if they continue to infringe upon the rights of our citizens, they will be challenged.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.