

*This Week in Washington*



WITH CONGRESSMAN  
JO BONNER

### Building on Alabama's Aerospace Industry

Continuing to build on Alabama's growing aerospace presence, Senator Richard Shelby, Congressman Bud Cramer, and I – as well as Mobile Mayor Sam Jones, State House Speaker Seth Hammett, and other local elected officials traveled to the Farnborough International Air Show in London for a trans-Atlantic economic development mission last week.

Governor Bob Riley joined the trip mid-week after staying back for the decision from Volkswagen.

As you know, Alabama's newest corporate partners, including Airbus, EADS and its partnerships with Northrop Grumman are helping to make the Southeast a growing center of American aerospace excellence.

The economic impact of these projects goes far beyond Alabama's borders, and our recruitment efforts have grown to reflect that regional influence.

While in London, we had the opportunity to meet with key players in the aerospace and defense industries as well as with approximately 30 supplier companies looking for opportunities to locate near the site where the new Air Force tankers will be assembled.

Many of our European allies expressed concerns over the xenophobic rhetoric that has encircled the tanker competition since the Air Force first awarded Northrop Grumman the new tanker contract back in February.

This protectionist campaign being waged by Boeing and its supporters in Congress is sending a dangerous message to our most trusted allies—that the only way Congress will fund tanker is if the Department of Defense (DOD) is forced to buy the less capable, inferior aircraft.

This tanker competition has received more scrutiny than any other defense acquisition project in history, and to overturn this contract award on protectionist reasons would irreparably damage the future of major U.S. defense and aerospace companies.

The Northrop Grumman tanker will be built in Alabama – by Alabamians, Mississippians, and Floridians with 230 supplier factories in all 50 states, creating 48,000 new American jobs.

Clearly, there is much at stake, and we have a lot riding on Alabama's developing aerospace industry.

At the end of the day, it is the American warfighter who needs the best, most capable aircraft to support them as they go into harm's way. I remain confident the DOD and the Air Force will ultimately reaffirm that the Northrop Grumman tanker is indeed the better airplane.

### President Lifts Executive Ban On Offshore Drilling

President Bush last week lifted an executive ban on the exploration of oil and gas in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Since 1982, the majority of America's offshore areas have been restricted to energy production.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush issued a presidential directive banning new energy production off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, parts of offshore Alaska, and the eastern Gulf of Mexico. In 1998, President Bill Clinton extended these restrictions through 2012.

The president's action last week clears away executive branch restrictions on the OCS, except for areas within existing marine sanctuaries. Under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, areas off the coast of Florida are also off limits until 2022.

Experts estimate that these off-limit areas of the OCS could produce about 18 billion barrels of oil, approximately 30 years worth of imports from Saudi Arabia.

Advances in technology now make it possible to explore for this oil out of the sight of the public, while protecting coral reefs and habitats and protecting against oil spills.

Now that the president has lifted the executive order banning offshore drilling, it is up to Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic leadership to allow a vote on the House floor to lift the ban on deep ocean energy exploration.

An analysis compiled by the House Republican Whip Roy Blunt found that since 1994, 91 percent of House Republicans have voted in favor of legislation to increase access to American energy, while 86 percent of House Democrats consistently voted against those same bills.

More specifically, Whip Blunt's analysis found that 83 percent of Democrats have opposed the development of deep-sea energy while 81 percent of Republicans have voted in support.

With \$4 gas, we cannot allow America's offshore oil and natural gas reserves to remain unused.

Offshore drilling is long overdue and a commonsense step towards reducing America's dependence on foreign oil.

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.

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