

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Boeing Continues Attacks on Tanker Award

As you all know by now, Boeing is challenging the Air Force's decision to award the potential \$40 billion tanker deal to the Northrop Grumman/EADS team, which plans to assemble the tankers in Mobile. The Air Force contract includes 179 tankers to be delivered over the next 15 years.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is expected to make a decision on Boeing's protest within 100 days, or by June 19, 2008.

Since the announcement of the award, Boeing and its supporters have launched an all-out public relations campaign designed to portray the Northrop Grumman tanker – a tanker that will be built at Brookley Field in Mobile, Alabama by Alabamians, Floridians, and Mississippians – as a foreign-made tanker.

Boeing has spent about \$3 million on ads in major newspapers across the country since it lost the tanker contract. These ads attempt to make Boeing's case in the court of public opinion by obscuring the facts with xenophobic rhetoric that insults and ignores the hard working people of America's Gulf Coast region.

Last week, 22 former Air Force generals reacted to Boeing's tactics in a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates. The generals expressed their concern over "the vitriolic attack on the Air Force by those who disagree with the outcome of the KC-45 Tanker competition."

The letter went on to state, "Delays in the tanker program will only serve to put the lives of crews flying these aging systems in greater jeopardy."

"We fully support the Air Force in its desire to provide the best and most capable tanker to our Warfighters and urge you to continue to stand up and help defend them from scurrilous and politically motivated attacks that have no basis in the source selection criteria for our next tanker."

Meanwhile, Senators Shelby, Sessions, and I – among others - continue to reach out to other Members of Congress as well as local and national media working to set the record straight and to garner support for our tanker as this process moves forward.

In fact, late last month, I sent a letter to almost every member of the House of Representatives regarding the debate surrounding the tanker contract.

I enclosed copies of editorials from USA Today, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal, all of which support the Air Force's decision to award the Northrop Grumman team the tanker contract.

Naturally, I agree with these editorial pages. The Pentagon got this one right.

And, I remain confident the GAO will uphold the award, in which case, our Gulf Coast will be building the new American tanker.

Former Congressman Bill Dickinson Passes Away

One of the staunchest supporters of America's – and Alabama's – military programs passed away last week. My friend and former Alabama Congressman Bill Dickinson made countless contributions toward the betterment of our state and our nation, and he will certainly be missed.

Bill served as ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, and from this position, he was a steadfast supporter of increased military funding and halting the spread of communism throughout the world. He was also a fierce protector of military bases vital to Alabama's economy.

A lifelong Democrat, Bill changed parties in 1964 and ran as a Republican to the U.S. House of Representatives for Alabama's Second District.

In so doing, he was part of the Barry Goldwater sweep in Alabama that propelled five Republican congressional candidates to victory in what had previously been solid Democratic country.

Bill Dickinson went on to serve 13 consecutive terms in Congress. The enormous impact of this dedicated public servant will be felt throughout our state for generations to come.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Barbara; their four children; and their five grandchildren at this difficult time.

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.

--30--

For release the week of Monday, April 07, 2008. For more information please contact Mike Lewis at (202)225-4931.