

An emotional shockwave reverberated across the Gulf Coast last Thursday afternoon after the Pentagon announced that Boeing was chosen to build the new Air Force tanker. The decision was deeply disappointing and prompts serious questions.

The Defense Department's emphatic claim that Boeing was the clear winner begs a thorough explanation as to how an aircraft of noted inferior capability, and which doesn't even exist except on paper, could be found the superior choice for our military and the taxpayers? Did the Pentagon simply give in to Boeing's threats and pressure tactics for fear of further delays in the already drawn out tanker selection?

Many defense industry analysts speculated that EADS-North America, which planned to assemble the tanker in Mobile, was favored to capture the coveted \$40 billion contract. EADS already has a proven tanker flying for a number of our allies.

The EADS tanker is based on its Airbus A330 body frame, a design that has already beaten Boeing's 767-based tanker in four previous overseas competitions.

The U.S. Air Force also selected the EADS tanker as its choice in 2008 before Boeing challenged the award.

That said, this competition has been challenged before and it's not unlikely it will be challenged again. It will ultimately be up to EADS to determine whether they will protest this decision and I will fully support whatever decision they make.

House Approves Historic Spending Cuts:

It has been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. On February 19, the Republican House took a very firm step forward on the long path toward restoring our country, and our long-term economy, to sound financial footing.

The House passed a spending bill for the remainder of 2011 with a cumulative impact of \$100 billion in reduced spending over the president's budget request, setting the stage for a showdown with the White House and the Senate.

If approved by the Senate and signed by the president, the House-passed, year-long "continuing resolution" will take effect prior to the expiration of the stop-gap funding on March 4.

Last year, Speaker Pelosi and her Democrat leadership failed to pass a 2011 budget and the federal government has been operating since October first at last year's spending level.

We all know that government overspending has reached unsustainable levels and must be addressed. When my predecessor, Congressman Sonny Callahan, first came to Washington in 1985, the national debt was \$1.8 trillion. Twenty six years later, we face an almost-incomprehensible \$14 trillion national debt.

To be sure, racking up debt has been a bipartisan activity that many Americans have also embraced. However, the federal red ink has dramatically increased under President Obama, jumping by \$3.5 trillion in only two years.

At the same time that the House passed a reduced 2011 spending bill, the country also marked the two-year anniversary of President Obama's controversial economic stimulus package. His stimulus failed to deliver promised job growth as national unemployment has remained at 9 percent or above for the last 21 months.

However, it did stimulate an additional \$367 billion in debt interest payments owed by taxpayers.

The president has also promised to freeze spending, yet his new budget for next year sets in motion a spending spree that could balloon the national debt by an additional \$11 trillion over the next nine years.

In contrast, the Republican House did something that has not been done since World War II. We voted to reduce the fiscal 2011 spending by an additional \$61 billion, which when added to nearly \$40 billion in reduced spending already in effect this year, lowers the overall 2011 federal budget by \$100 billion.

These cuts effectively return federal spending to 2008 levels in keeping with the goals we laid out in A Pledge to America last fall.

To be frank, some felt these cuts were not significant enough, while others said the spending reductions went too far. In my view, they were a good first step. It is also important to emphasize that the Democrat-controlled Senate and the White House still have to approve our reduced spending plan before it can become law.

The president has already threatened to veto it.

The federal spending cuts passed by the House are only the beginning of the process to rein in our budget deficit and finally make a dent in the colossal national debt. You are encouraged to weigh in with your views on what programs should be reduced in order to help balance the budget.

You can make your suggestions to the House web site "YouCut" at <http://majorityleader.gov/YouCut/>

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.