

Airbus Only the Beginning - Much Work Ahead to Lure More Jobs to South Alabama:

For the last two weeks, South Alabamians have been contemplating the news of Airbus' arrival in Mobile and what the announcement may hold for our region.

Understandably, there is plenty of optimism as we all look to the future and, to be sure, there is plenty of work ahead to leverage this major economic development victory into an even greater win for our area.

Successful economic development is deeply rooted in relationships. While Airbus' decision to build their first American aircraft manufacturing plant in our front yard came as news to many, for those who have been in contact with Airbus and its parent company, EADS, for the last seven and a half years, the final commitment was not a complete surprise. Countless phone calls, emails, personal meetings and impromptu strategy sessions have marked what we always felt was destined to become a permanent bond between South Alabama and EADS/Airbus.

As I noted previously, EADS and Airbus have also invested a considerable amount of time and resources in the shared belief that our corner of the world is a special place – a place where they can launch an industry that will change the shape of American commercial aviation for generations to come.

Beyond the 1,000 direct Airbus jobs that will come to Mobile's Brookley Aeroplex, there are even more supplier jobs that will be created to support aircraft production. Airbus hopes to double the \$12 billion it already spends on U.S. aviation suppliers. It is estimated that for every job that will come to Airbus' \$600 million assembly plant, three to four more will be created elsewhere. The question is where?

The fog of the celebration from July 2 had barely thinned when a delegation of local, state and federal officials, as well as a team of economic development professionals from South Alabama, boarded flights for London to begin the task of capturing supplier jobs.

To repeat, relationships are vital in economic development. Airbus' commitment to Mobile made Alabama the belle of the ball in the eyes of the world's aviation industry leaders. The ball, however, was the international air show held last week in Farnborough, England, a city of about 57,000 people just outside of London.

While the multi-day event is dubbed an air show, a better way to describe it is an enormous aviation trade show – a time and place where the planet's biggest players in commercial and military aviation gather to see the latest products and make business deals.

While Alabama got plenty of attention at Farnborough – in fact, we had the highest visibility of any state – our delegation was determined to work the event aggressively and completely.

After an opening reception for potential suppliers and aerospace interests across the Gulf Coast, the real work began. For the next two days, the team from South Alabama left our hotel at the crack of dawn in order to catch a 45 minute train ride out to Farnborough. Once at the air show, Team Alabama embarked on a rapid series of meetings throughout the day to sell Alabama's workforce, and many ideal locations, to the CEO's of the world's top aviation companies.

In addition to meeting with Airbus officials, we met with dozens of major suppliers as well as many smaller companies, often conducting our meetings in small rooms or in corners to escape the crowds. It was a tiring yet exhilarating experience.

Particular meetings that stand out were those with aircraft engine manufacturers and titanium parts fabricators. Both of these critical links in the Airbus supply chain hold promise for Southwest Alabama.

After our full-court press at Farnborough, we will continue to make contact with potential suppliers. Many seeds were planted in London and the real work to cultivate the relationships sown last week has already begun.

House Passes Second Repeal of Obamacare:

Last Wednesday, the House voted 244 to 185 to repeal President Obama's Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). Five Democrats joined Republicans in rejecting the costly and unpopular health care law.

While I wholeheartedly support the House effort to repeal Obamacare, unfortunately, my return flight from Farnborough did not arrive in time for me to cast my vote. That said, I have already voted twice against Obamacare when it originally came before the House in 2009 and 2010, and I voted on January 11, 2011, to repeal it again.

Rest assured, I continue to support House efforts to repeal Obamacare and replace it with reforms that don't take away patient choice or drive up the cost of care.

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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