

To: Sandra Englund
From: United States Senator Patty Murray
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2008 4:00 PM
Subject: Response from Senator Murray

Dear Mrs. Englund:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Pentagon's plan to replace its aging KC-135 tanker fleet. I appreciate hearing from you on this issue.

As you know, Air Force tankers are used to refuel aircraft in mid-air, saving time and allowing more flexibility for our military. Currently, the Air Force uses Boeing-made KC-135 Stratotankers for the majority of these operations, and the average KC-135 tanker is about 45 years old. Recently, the Air Force began a selection process to replace a number of tankers. This process has generated much debate within the military and within Congress, as Boeing and European-based Airbus both submitted competing contract proposals to build these planes.

I was angered and very disappointed when on February 29th, the Air Force announced that Airbus was the winner of the \$40 billion aerial refueling tanker contract. It is deeply troubling that this decision would award a contract to benefit a company that the U.S. government is currently suing at the World Trade Organization for receiving illegal subsidies. It is difficult for the government to justify this conflict of interest. Additionally, the tanker award to Airbus is a blow to the domestic aerospace industry and its workers, weakening our country's ability to provide our military with the best equipment for generations to come.

America has the world's best military, and it is essential that they be provided with the best equipment to complete their missions. If this contract had gone to Boeing, it would have meant 44,000 new American jobs, including 9,000 jobs in Washington state. In addition to the direct economic benefits that come with domestic manufacturing, this activity would also allow our workers and engineers to develop and test new technologies that could further America as a leader in this industry and help create innovation within our military technology sector for years to come. Now this potential is being shipped overseas to build up European assembly lines and European military technology at a time when our economy is struggling and our defense industrial base is threatened. It is indefensible for the Air Force to give this \$40 billion contract to Airbus.

In comparison, Boeing has 75 years of experience designing planes for the Air Force. Its tankers have been a reliable part of the U.S. military fleet for more than fifty years. Some families have three generations of tanker squadron pilots, all of whom flew Boeing tankers. Not only would a contract award to Boeing ensure that 44,000 jobs and \$40 billion stay in America, but Boeing could have started building the tanker immediately by using the already existing 767 line in Everett, Washington.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, this issue has been one of my top priorities. In hearings I have been pressing Department of Defense and Air Force officials for answers to understand how they arrived at this decision. As you may know, this decision is being reviewed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). However, there are elements of this decision that are outside of the GAO's purview to investigate. As a Member of Congress, I will use every tool I have to get the answers the American people deserve, in order to learn how this process led to this result. As we move forward, I will work to reach an outcome that will not jeopardize our national security, will not outsource our defense workforce, and will not provide tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars to an overseas company that has yet to deliver their proposed tanker.

Again, thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with me. Be assured that I will keep your thoughts in mind as I continue to fight hard for the needs of our service members. Please keep in touch.

I hope all is well in Auburn.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray
United States Senator