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On the Dual Procurement of KC-X Tanker Aircraft

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today to talk about what I think is the most important issue in America, and that is jobs, specifically something that this administration can do quickly to help alleviate our jobs problem. Many people in this country recognize that there has been a debate in Congress for the last few years about how to replace our aging tanker fleet in the Air Force. We have tankers that are over 50 years old and need to be replaced now. We have had a competition for the contract to replace those tankers ongoing for years that has been nothing but bureaucratic.

What I would like to urge the President to do is instruct his Defense Department to consider something that our late colleague Mr. Murtha supported, and that was dual procurement of these tankers. We can take the two major prime contractors, Boeing and Northrop Grumman, and allow both of them to proceed with tanker production to do a couple things: One, to immediately have an injection of jobs into the country, a bigger injection than we would have had by sole source procurement, but also we would more rapidly then get the fleet of tankers replaced.

Under the current construct, it would take 40 years. I don't think anybody wants the warfighter to be having to fly 80- and 90-year-old tankers. I understand that the Air Force would need its procurement budget plussed up because they currently are expecting only to be able to afford 15 tankers per year. I think the President could take some of the stimulus funds, which were ostensibly to be used for job creation, move that to the Air Force's budget so that we could, instead of having 15 per year, have 24 per year, which would allow each company to produce 12 tankers per year.

This would create an immediate influx of new jobs not just in the tanker procurement, but also in the surrounding supplier industries and in the communities. This would be an economic engine in the various States that this production would take place. It would be good for the warfighter, good for our economy, good for American jobs. The President ought to do it.

Mr. President, it is about jobs. I urge you to focus on this issue.