over Boeing to make our critical new aerial refueling tanker. This is the Air Force, not Alice in Wonderland. I pay credit and associate myself with the remarks of the distinguished Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, and thank her for reserving this time, for taking a leadership role, along with her colleague from Washington, Senator CANTWELL. I thank them both for their efforts. We are going to need a bipartisan approach to this to see if we can't get some answers.

Simply put, it does not make sense that the Air Force would choose a foreign entity that has no prior tanker experience to build the next generation of refueling aircraft for the men and women of our Air Force. I met with the Air Force yesterday. I appreciate that. It was about an hour and a half meeting. It was not pleasant. We had what we call ''meaningful dialog.'' I am still not satisfied with their conclusion. In fact, I think there are many more questions that must be answered before this bid conclusion should move forward.

For example, as the distinguished Senator has pointed out, why can't the Air Force brief Boeing sooner than next week? We already have leaks all over this town as to exactly what happened and the specifics of the RFP and the bid selection and everything else, but Boeing has not had a debriefing. Yesterday the Air Force said it was OK, that Boeing said: Fine, we are OK with a briefing next week on Tuesday. That is not the case.

The two competitors were originally told that the briefing would be within 4 to 5 days of the contract announcement. The Air Force is not holding up to that bargain. Why did the secondary cargo mission—i.e., a larger plane—factor so large in the announcement briefing when this was a competition for a tanker? How could an airplane as large as the A330, which burns 24 percent more in fuel than the KC–767, possibly be valued as less costly? How did the Air Force evaluate the risk associated with a foreign government owning and subsidizing the Airbus tanker? Why were the fixed price options discussed at the announcement brief when the life-cycle cost was supposed to be the only measure? Is the Air Force concerned about delays and other issues stemming from the fact that EADS Airbus have never built a tanker with a boom? Will the Air Force need new equipment to deal with the repair of a foreign tanker? Why does the Air Force place cargo space over fuel efficiency and the ability to land and take off from more places? Where is this larger airplane going to land? Is the Air Force prepared to pay way more for the Airbus because of the amount of fuel it takes to fly them and the amount of capital it takes to open a brandnew assembly line in Europe? Is the Air Force aware that they currently do not use all of their available cargo space in the fleet? Is the Air Force aware that the Boeing 767 would provide even greater cargo space than they have now?

What about the issues regarding the fact that the EADS Airbus company made the Lakota light utility helicopter? The way it was delivered, it can't even fly on hot days. They are putting air conditioning units in that helicopter. That makes it modified and makes it less maneuverable.

Is the Air Force at all concerned with the backlash, described by Senator MURRAY, all across this country regarding the fact that they did not consider American jobs, much less the WTO dispute with Airbus or government subsidies issue with the EADS proposal? I can tell you, I hope I have been able to express my dismay over the Air Force's choice, but the problems simply don't end there. The Airbus frame will be made in Europe. There is no question about that. The nose will be made in France, the wings in Great Britain, and part of the fuselage in Germany. Bonjour, the Air Force has certainly gone into the wild blue European yonder, and they have never done this before.

The Air Force gave no consideration to the fact that Boeing has built a tanker that lasted over 50 years. With every airframe being built in France, we are paying for the French national health care system. What kind of sense does that make? In fact, they gave more credit to Northrup Grumman for making other defense systems as recently as last year than they did Boeing. That is saying something about this competition when you consider Northrup won't even be making most of the plane. Airbus will. Again and again in this competition, the Air Force has not judged the two bids fairly. Not only did they not consider past performance accurately, they also placed a much higher price on the cargo space than they led anyone to believe.

As my colleague from Kansas, Congressman TODD TIAHRT, expressed yesterday in the meeting with the Air Force, if they wanted an aircraft as large as the KC–10, they should have put out an RFP for one. But they didn't. They asked for a tanker, and that is what Boeing proposed. Airbus proposed something much different. It is my opinion that the men and women flying those aircraft are going to suffer for it.

Make no mistake: Unless something changes, we will be dealing with the ramifications of this bid for the next 80 years. It will take Airbus longer to start up the assembly line than Boeing, and it will take them longer to produce a viable plane. When they finally do, that plane will be just plain too big.

I am deeply troubled by this announcement. I expect to see a very detailed documentation on the questions we raised yesterday that were not answered from the Air Force. I also expect them to brief both competitors quickly. The long and short of it is, if this decision holds, it will be at the cost of American jobs, American dollars, if not our national security.

I again thank Senator MURRAY for reserving this time and yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HOUSING CRISIS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to take a few moments of my leader time, not to interfere in the record with this discussion that has been ongoing between the Senators from Kansas and Washington.

Last week we debated housing. Democrats want to raise monthly mortgage payments on everyone who wants to buy a new home or refinance an existing one. Republicans have a broader, bolder plan. We want to create the economic conditions that make home ownership easier—more jobs and higher wages. Our first priority is to help families who are either facing foreclosure or seeing the values of their homes drop as a result of other foreclosures nearby.

This morning I want to talk about one specific action we can take to help these families. Home values are falling not only because of cut-rate sell-offs by banks but also because areas with high volume and vacant homes often see an increase in crime and neglect. One thing government has done in the past to the help reverse a slide in home values is to make tax credits available to people who pick up foreclosed homes in affected areas. This worked in the mid-1970s when a period of easing credit led to overconstruction and higher interest rates. Congress responded with a $6,000 tax credit spread over 3 years for anyone who bought a new home for their primary residence. This is what they did back in the 1970s. Home values were stabilized. Inventory dropped, and the housing market recovered.

Congress should do the same today. Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON of Georgia, a real expert in real estate and housing, who spent decades in that field, has a fabulous idea. He saw the good effects of the tax credit that Congress provided back in the 1970s. Now he is proposing a $15,000 credit spread over 3 years for people who buy newer homes with a first mortgage in default or single-family homes in the possession of a bank. Let me say that again. He is proposing a $15,000 tax credit spread over 3 years for people who buy newer homes with a first mortgage in default or single family homes in the possession of a bank. Buyers must occupy those homes as their principal residence to be eligible. We are not about to let speculators come in and make the current problem even worse.

This is one idea Republicans are proposing to help families struggling with the painful effects of the housing downturn. I mentioned some of these ideas yesterday. We will discuss others as the week goes on.