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GOVERNORS BARBOUR, RILEY AND JINDAL ANNOUNCE LAUNCH OF THE AEROSPACE ALLIANCE
501(c)(6) Will Establish Region as a World-Class Aerospace, Space and Aviation Corridor

First Objective: Help Secure KC-45 Tanker Contract for Region

Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, Alabama Governor Bob Riley and Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal today announced the launch of The Aerospace Alliance, a 501(c)(6) private/public organization that will establish the Gulf Coast and surrounding region as a world-class aerospace, space and aviation corridor. The announcement was made before hundreds of supporters at an event in Bay Minette, Alabama.

"This alliance will go far in promoting our region for what it is – one of the largest aerospace corridors in the world and a great place for companies in this sector to do business," said Governor Barbour, who addressed the event via video uplink. "The Gulf Coast states share geographic proximity, a long tradition of aerospace and aviation activities and a skilled and experienced workforce, and by joining together, we will be well-positioned to take advantage of opportunities to grow this sector in our region."

The members of The Aerospace Alliance include business leaders, economic development professionals and government officials. By promoting their common assets and the region's long-standing tradition of excellence in the aerospace industry, participating states and organizations will seize opportunities to grow the sector, attracting more jobs and suppliers to the region. Members will advocate for policies, programs and specific aerospace projects on the local, state and national level.

The Gulf Coast region is already home to some of the world's most advanced aerospace installations, a number of key NASA facilities and numerous military installations critical to the Department of Defense flight missions and training. The region is centrally located to markets across the United States and offers access to global markets via numerous air and deep water ports.

The first priority of The Aerospace Alliance is to help secure the KC-45 aerial tanker program for the region. If the KC-45 aircraft is selected, the tankers will be assembled in Mobile, Alabama, bringing 48,000 direct and indirect jobs to the region, and thousands of direct and indirect jobs to the region. With the tanker program, the region would be one of the largest in the world to build large-body aircraft, along with France and the Pacific Northwest. The Aerospace Alliance will identify, educate, organize and activate allies to aggressively communicate why the KC-45 is the best solution for the warfighter, for the Gulf Coast and surrounding region, and ultimately for the United States.

While the KC-45 is the first priority for The Aerospace Alliance, it is not the only one. Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida are currently home to manufacturers of helicopters, missile defense systems, composite aircraft structures, engine components and many R&D firms. The Aerospace Alliance will collaborate to working towards growing these aerospace, aviation, space and defense industries in the region.

Governor Riley said, "Last year taught us something: while we all know about our long tradition of aerospace excellence and the quality and skill sets of our workforce, obviously some parts of the country (Kansas and Washington State), might not be aware. We are going to educate them, and you are going to help us. We will work together to promote our region's many assets. We will work together to advocate for policies, programs and specific aerospace projects on the local, state and national level. The programs we attract will in turn attract suppliers, bringing even more jobs and development. Our first initiative is to win the KC-45 tanker, our first lesson is Geography -- Mobile, Alabama and the Gulf Coast States are part of the U.S. and our jobs are American."

Mitch Waldman, Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems Vice President applauded their efforts, saying, "We already know that the Gulf Coast is a center of excellence in defense, aviation and aerospace. We look forward to working with Governors and leaders of Aerospace Alliance states, and the many members and supporters of The Alliance, to spread the word to the rest of the world."

Participants emphasized the need for jobs in the region's economy, badly damaged by both Hurricane Katrina and the recession. Unemployment rates are high throughout the entire Southeast, and both Alabama and Florida have unemployment over 10 percent.

The Aerospace Alliance is a 501(c)(6) private/public organization. For more information, visit www.aerospacealliance.com.