

SHELBY TRIES TO SHUT DOWN US SENATE TO BENEFIT FOREIGN COMPANY

There has been a lot of discussion of how foreign companies will be able to influence elections and politics given the Citizens United deal. But foreign companies are already dominating our politics.

Consider Richard Shelby's decision to place holds on all of Obama's nominees unless some federal money that may benefit Alabama gets released.

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) has put an extraordinary "blanket hold" on at least 70 nominations President Obama has sent to the Senate, according to multiple reports this evening. The hold means no nominations can move forward unless Senate Democrats can secure a 60-member cloture vote to break it, or until Shelby lifts the hold.

The key issue is that Shelby wants the Air Force to tweak an RFP for refueling tankers so that Airbus (partnered with Northrup Grumman) would win the bid again over Boeing. The contract had been awarded in 2008, but the GAO found that the Air Force had erred in calculating the award. After the Air Force wrote a new RFP in preparation to rebid the contract, Airbus calculated that it would not win the new bid, and started complaining. Now, Airbus is threatening to withdraw from the competition unless the specs in the RFP are revised.

Essentially, then, Shelby's threat is primarily about gaming this bidding process to make sure Airbus—and not Boeing—wins the contract (there's a smaller program he's complaining about, too, but this is the truly huge potential bounty for

his state).

I understand why any Senator would fight for jobs in his or her state. And I understand that there was dirty corruption in this original contracting process.

But underlying the refueling contract is the question of whether the US military ought to spend what may amount to \$100 billion over the life of the contract with a foreign company, Airbus. Particularly a company that the WTO found preliminarily to be illegally benefiting from subsidies from European governments.

Richard Shelby is preparing to shut down the Senate to try to force the government to award a key military function to a foreign company.