



**News from the Office of
Congressman Rob Wittman**
First District, Virginia



For Immediate Release Contact: Mary Springer

May 1, 2009

Phone: 202-225-4261

Cell: 202-225-5887

WASHINGTON WEEKLY UPDATE

Congress is back in Washington this week and I'm continuing to keep my ear to the ground and advance issues important to both the First Congressional District and the Commonwealth as a whole. We received some great news in that the blue crab population is starting to rebound in the Chesapeake and the Virginia Indian tribal recognition bill has cleared another hurdle on its way to passage.

This time last year, I joined with my colleagues in Washington and Richmond to sound the alarm concerning the dire situation facing the blue crab fishery in the Chesapeake Bay. I encouraged and supported Governor Kaine's petition for a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration declaration of a fishery disaster for Chesapeake Bay blue crabs. Through our efforts, Congress provided \$20 million in assistance to restore the fishery and provide assistance to watermen. I am cautiously optimistic to hear that the blue crab population in the Chesapeake Bay is coming back. We need to ensure the health of the blue crab population, while at the same time keeping in mind that the effects the harvest restrictions have on our watermen.

In addition, any long-term recovery of the blue crab ultimately depends on the water quality of the Bay, and that is why I have introduced the Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act. This bill would enhance the coordination, flexibility, and efficiency of restoration efforts; and it would enact the same management and budgeting tools that are key to successful complex environmental restoration projects such as the Great Lakes, the California Delta Region, and the Florida Everglades. By improving the water quality of the Bay, we will help not only the blue crab population, but also oyster populations and other resources vital to Virginia's environment, culture, history, and economy. I will continue to work with federal agencies and the Commonwealth of Virginia to ensure a healthy Chesapeake Bay.

On Wednesday, I joined all other members of the House Committee on Natural Resources in sending H.R. 1385, the Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act of 2009, to the full House of Representatives for a final vote. The bill would extend federal recognition. Just yesterday the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee in an effort to request 50 million dollars to cover the costs of continued detention of enemy combatants currently at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba after the facility is shut down within the next year. The money Secretary Gates is requesting could cover the costs of modifying U.S. military or civilian prisons or adding new wings to accommodate the detainees.

WITTMAN WEEKLY WASHINGTON UPDATE

May 1, 2009

The Secretary went on to joke that he “fully expect(s) to have 535 pieces of legislation before the process is complete saying ‘not in my district, not in my state’”. However, for the rest of America and the Commonwealth of Virginia this is no joking matter.

The ramifications for bringing these individuals onto American soil reach far and wide, particularly in the case of the First Congressional District which hosts a number of military facilities. The Marine Corps Base at Quantico has been discussed as one of the facilities to house detainees. Quantico is currently an open base where anyone may drive onto the facility by simply showing a government ID, and would cost untold millions to securely close.

Further, at a time where defense spending is being cut across the board there is no logical reason why we would spend vital dollars duplicating a secure facility which has served as a safe and removed location for the detention of these individuals. Additionally, the constraints on the outlying area in terms of infrastructure, traffic, and movement would in of itself cause the localities and citizens a major headache. Not to mention the concern it would place on residents about a possible jail break or attack to free these detainees.

To this end I have cosponsored three pieces of legislation to prevent such an idea from becoming a reality. First, Congressman J. Randy Forbes (VA-4) has introduced a bill which would prohibit federal funds from being used to transfer individuals from Guantanamo Bay to facilities in Virginia or to pay for their housing at any of these facilities.

Next, my greatest concern is that these detainees are brought to the United States under any circumstances. I have joined Congressman Tom Cole (OK-4) in support for his legislation which would effectively accomplish the same ends of Congressman Forbes bill, but would apply to all states in the U.S.

Lastly, I have also cosponsored a bill by Congressman Jeff Miller (FL-1) which would not allow for the treatment of any enemy combatants detained at Guantanamo at any Armed Forces of Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility.

I have been monitoring this situation from the first discussions of transitioning detainees to the U.S. and I will continue to use my position on the House Armed Services Committee to fight their movement to not only the Commonwealth, but our Nation.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

###

Thomas A. Crosson
Deputy Press Secretary
The Office of Congressman Robert J. Wittman (VA-1)
1318 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

WITTMAN WEEKLY WASHINGTON UPDATE

May 1, 2009

Main: (202) 225-4261

Blackberry: (202) 593-1424

Fax: (202) 225-4382

<http://wittman.house.gov>