

First, the new command will stand up in early April and will serve as the Navy's lead organization and Center of Excellence for addressing Naval, Joint, and Combined Air and Missile Defense concerns with an initial focus on Ballistic Missile Defense. As the command expands through 2012 and beyond, its charter will include the entirety of Navy Integrated Air and Missile Defense. The proliferation of ballistic missiles is a dynamic threat throughout the world and this command enhances our Navy's ability to deliver an enduring, operationally effective, and supportable ballistic missile defense capability in defense of the United States, our deployed forces, and our allies and friends. The location of the Command at Dahlgren will be a much needed economic boost to the area, and I'm happy to have worked with the Navy to make it happen.

With that in mind, I would like to see the government find avenues to enable other citizens to take advantage of our nation's unique enterprising spirit. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses employ about half of all private sector employees and pay nearly 45% of the total U.S. private payroll. These citizen-created incubators of job growth have accounted for 60 to 80 percent of net new jobs annually over the last decade. In this great time of economic challenge the government should be giving a leg up to the same citizen-entrepreneurs who in history have developed the assembly line, flight, and set industry benchmarks. It is through their hard work and efforts that our country is the world's leading economy, and it is through their continued success and ideas that we will see our way to the brighter future I know is at the end of this seemingly dark road.

Also, as our military members leave the active ranks, we can create opportunities for them to continue their already outstanding contributions to our country. For this reason I have introduced legislation to amend the Small Business Act to make service-connected disabled veterans eligible for the 8(a) business development program. This legislation would equate service-connected disabled veterans to women and minorities in the small business arena. Our veterans have made a great sacrifice on our behalf, and they deserve equal treatment in small business management opportunities and tax relief. Through this program I am excited to see how our veterans would be able to continue to strengthen our economy, our communities, and the opportunities for their families.

I remain confident in our country's perseverance and spirit in a time where we all are affected in on way or another by this economic downturn. It is not just small businesses, but new

businesses that will help us turn back the increasing level of unemployment that we have seen over this past year. To accomplish our goals it will take a combined effort from both sides of the aisle. I will continue to work with all Members of Congress to ensure a stable economic footing and an environment which fosters job growth in the First District, the Commonwealth, and the 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.