

As we wrap up another week in Washington, DC, the nation will pause as we honor America's Veterans on Memorial Day. The remembrance of this day was especially poignant this week. I was honored to attend the fifth annual Gold Star Wives reception in the U.S. Capitol building on Thursday. This organization was founded in 1945 by the widows of World War II, and continues today to serve and bring together those spouses who lost a loved one during active duty service. Their courage, in the face of tremendous loss, is indescribable.

Memorial Day gives us an opportunity to remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, and those who are serving bravely across the globe. It is a day of unity, and a day to cherish the liberties endowed to us through our Constitution and defended by so many throughout our history.

Each week, I have the opportunity to focus on the issues that matter most to our servicemen and women, our veterans, and their families, through my position on the House Armed Services Committee. I'm proud to serve them through discussion, hearings and each vote I cast. It's important that these individuals have input on what policy Congress puts forward. I'm grateful to my Veterans Advisory Council for their input and the work they do on behalf of all veterans.

As I head back to the First District for the District Work period next week, I'm looking forward to many events in the coming days, to observe this remembrance and to share the simple truths that I've been focused on in my work on Capitol Hill; the simple truths that serve as the foundation for our freedom, and as the calling for so many veterans who have served.

Washington often focuses on the complex policy and politics, yet from the very birth of our nation, our strength is found not in the complex, but rather simple truths that served as the foundation of our freedom. Government is designed to defend and protect those rights. The simple truths that:

To defend America we need the best-trained, best-equipped Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps in the world and for our military personnel and their families to receive the support they have earned.

We must be proud of America and for our success. We must keep terrorists off of our soil, not fight to get them here.

We can defend America better from a position of strength, rather than a position of weakness.

Our defense strategy should be driven by defense needs, not solely by the budget.

The gratitude we owe our servicemembers is immeasurable, and Memorial Day serves as a vital reminder. Please join me in thanking our veterans this weekend.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*