

As I fill up my gas tank during my frequent travels around the First District and up to Washington, D.C., I know that if I am feeling the pain of \$4-a-gallon gas, struggling families are also feeling the same anguish. I continue to hear feedback from many constituents who say that U.S. energy resources are being underutilized, and the simple truth is that economically besieged families need relief. Energy production off of Virginia's shore would create thousands of jobs while at the same time providing a greater supply of oil to combat rising energy prices. Taking advantage of the lessons learned from the Gulf's Deepwater Horizon disaster, Virginia can lead the way with safe energy exploration. Of course, this is only one component of a much-needed comprehensive energy plan for America that must also include alternative and renewable, sustainable energy not only to lower prices but also to increase certainty in our future energy supply.

This week, I voted in support of a bill that would help lead us into a future of energy independence. H.R. 1230, the Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act, would require the Obama Administration to move forward without delay in conducting lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and off of Virginia's coast that were canceled by the Administration earlier this year. Due to the Obama Administration's actions, 2011 would be the first year since 1958 in which no offshore lease sales occur. H.R. 1230 can prevent that from happening, while at the same time providing a bridge to the future of energy as our entrepreneurs, inventors, and scientists continue to pursue more innovative and sustainable efforts to develop new sources.

This week we also honor our nation's public servants with Public Service Recognition Week. I am proud to represent so many public employees at the federal, state and local level. On Thursday, I had the privilege of speaking at the Stafford County Sheriff's Office Annual Awards Dinner. It was an honor to interact with these dedicated individuals, and I greatly admire the commitment and sacrifice shown by all public servants in the First District, the Commonwealth, and the Nation. As the news of Osama bin Laden's death spread quickly across the country, I thought of many powerful examples of public service. I recalled the determination of the fire and rescue workers at Ground Zero, and the courage of our military men and women who have been fighting overseas for our freedoms for almost ten years. I thought of the law enforcement officers who keep our communities safe every day and night, and the emergency first responders who we know will come to our call should we need their healing hands. These and many other exemplary citizens are the ones who take the lead in a crisis and are the first to approach difficulty when the natural reaction is to turn and run away. Without hesitation, they persevere and complete the most challenging tasks even when others have given up. And my sense is that too many in Washington, D.C. run in the wrong direction when faced with a crisis – Congress has a lot to learn from our Nation's many public servants.

In Congress, we are facing a significant challenge: to address our skyrocketing debt and deficit. There's a lot of talk about tightening budgets and cutting spending, and if Congress can exhibit the same qualities of determination and courage as our other public servants, we will be able to make the tough decisions and ensure a prosperous future for our communities and for our country. This week, let us honor our dedicated public servants. As President George W. Bush said to the New York City firefighters in the rubble of Ground Zero, "Thank you for your hard work, thank you for making the Nation proud, and may God bless America."

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