

The duties are spelled out clearly in our country's Constitution: the obligations to "provide for the common Defence," "To raise and support Armies," and "To provide and maintain a Navy." These responsibilities are quickly coming under attack from those who wish to slash the funding of our nation's defense even further.

I take these responsibilities very seriously. This week, I visited the Huntington Ingalls - Newport News Shipbuilding ship yard, which employs over 20,000 workers from our communities, encompassing the largest shipyard in the country. These individuals are working together to help meet the responsibility of defending our nation, building the most advanced weapons system in the world, our nuclear powered submarines and aircraft carriers for our United States Navy.

The Budget Control Act of 2011, which was signed into law in August, set a deadline of November 23, 2011, for the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (JSC), known to many as the "Super Committee," to present its deficit reduction plan. This plan will then be voted on by both Houses of Congress. Without a doubt, the JSC is considering all manner of spending cuts to reduce our nation's deficit, and I am certainly supportive of any efforts to solve our nation's fiscal problems. However, I am very concerned about additional reductions to our national defense capabilities and the risks these cuts could pose for the safety of our citizens and the security of our nation. Recently, I joined Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon and other members of the House Armed Services Committee in a letter to the JSC which outlined formal recommendations on deficit reduction with regard to defense. I also joined my fellow Virginia Congressman Randy Forbes in the introduction of the Strong Defense, Strong America Resolution, warning against further cuts to national defense spending.

Without a doubt, Congress must make some tough decisions as we move through the process

of fixing our federal budget. However, one of this body's most significant responsibilities is to provide for a fighting force that will allow this nation to prevent and confront future threats while at the same time meeting our fiscal obligations. Simply put, the severity of cuts to our nation's defense that are currently being discussed will weaken our force to an unacceptable level. Instead of blindly cutting valuable programs and initiatives, our government must have clear, strategic priorities regarding our national security, including the development of an agile and deployable force with the ability to face a wide range of threats. Our defense strategy should drive the defense budget, not the other way around. And of course, questions still remain about the \$450 billion that has already been cut from our defense programs over the next 10 years. What new risks are we willing to accept, and what capabilities will we be forced to shelve? I have urged the JSC to take a hard look at our defense strategy and capabilities before proposing dangerous cuts that would burden those who serve our nation so bravely and selflessly.

Virginia's First District is a place with a rich military history and a strong respect for those servicemen and women and their families who sacrifice so much for our freedoms every day. I will continue to fight to ensure that we meet the duties laid out in our Constitution; for our soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and their families to preserve the liberty and freedom we enjoy as a nation. Please continue to keep in touch with me through my website, [www.wittman.house.gov](http://www.wittman.house.gov), or by phone at 202-225-4261.

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