

Last week, the House Armed Services Committee held its marathon consideration of the Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets our nation's defense policy for the upcoming year. Debate and voting on amendments began at ten o'clock on Wednesday morning and continued until after two o'clock the following morning. This debate is important as our country faces spending challenges. Recently we have learned of threats and foiled plots of those seeking to do this country harm. Today, our men and women in uniform continue to bravely serve our nation around the world to combat those wishing to do us harm. We must provide our men and women who volunteer to go into harm's way to defend our liberties and freedoms everything they need to be victorious in this battle.

It is critical in the careful discussion of this complex piece of legislation that we make sure we make the right decisions for both the short and long term defense of this nation. The focus is truly on crafting our national defense strategy and finding the best ways to prepare and equip our exceptional men and women in uniform. Committee members will often disagree on various aspects of tactics, approach, and funding, but during the committee consideration they are able to discuss these differences in plain view of each other and the public, with ample opportunity to challenge their colleagues and fully explain their own points of view. Unfortunately, this committee discussion is just one day out of the year, and as all of you know, this back and forth open exchange of ideas needs to happen more often in Congress.

It was a lively discussion and I was pleased to have the support of the committee on two amendments I authored. One of my amendments ensures that no money will be used to fund the planning of a costly Base Realignment and Closure initiative next year, or BRAC as it is commonly known. Many folks in our area are familiar with BRAC due to the effects it had on our area in the 2005 BRAC round. BRAC has proven costly; taxpayers are still footing the bill from 2005 and will not see any savings until 2018. I strongly believe we cannot afford the added costs of BRAC during these tough economic times.

This week, the U.S. House of Representatives will consider this defense authorization bill that just passed out of committee. I look forward to this discussion, and I hope that you will be able to follow it on C-SPAN, through my website and social media sites, or through the news coverage.

In addition, last week the House passed a bill that lays out reductions in wasteful spending to reign-in the national debt and deficit, but ensures that our defense infrastructure remains strong enough to protect our homeland (H.R. 5652). The bill proposes to eliminate various forms of

waste in the federal government, while also ensuring that those folks who truly need assistance will continue to receive it. These sorts of initiatives are critical to preventing catastrophic cuts to our defense capabilities as well as to eliminating waste and abuse in programs that are designed to help those in greatest need. I am hopeful that the Senate will take up this legislation in the near future; even if they amend the House version, it is critical that the dialogue continue on how to prevent drastic cuts to our national defense and, in turn, put our nation on a responsible path in federal spending.

As the looming cuts to our national defense approach at the end of this year, as well as the expiration of various tax provisions and other economic policies, it is critical that everyone comes together for discussion to pursue common-sense solutions.

I am committed to taking the thoughts and ideas of folks in America's First District to Washington, D.C., to show them how the real people of America truly feel. Please keep your thoughts and suggestions coming to me. I can be reached via telephone at (202) 225-4261, through my website (www.wittman.house.gov), via Facebook (www.facebook.com/RepRobWittman), and on Twitter (www.twitter.com/RobWittman).

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.