

WASHINGTON, DC – As the days get hotter, I know that many folks in America's First District are spending their weekends close to water to beat the heat. At the same time, a lot of folks are working hard on the water each and every day, catching oysters and crabs and fish for their fellow Virginians to enjoy over meals with friends and family. Whether it's recreation or work that brings folks to the water this weekend, the Chesapeake Bay is what makes it possible.

The Bay is truly the heart of our region, providing a cultural and economic backbone for Virginia's First District. A great number of industries in our area depend on the Bay, including seafood, agriculture, tourism, and recreational and commercial fishing. Thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in revenue are dependent on the health and preservation of this historic body of water, but as you all know, the Bay faces many significant ecological challenges. I believe that it is critical to clean up the Bay by restoring water quality, protecting critical habitat and restoring plant and animal life. The Bay drives all sorts of economic, cultural, and recreational activities, and its restoration is a smart investment for the long term economic prosperity of all Virginians.

One of my chief goals is to enhance Bay cleanup efforts. That is why I was pleased this week as my Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act (H.R. 258) passed the House of Representatives as part of a larger package called the Conservation and Economic Growth Act (H.R. 2578). For years, the Bay restoration process has been plagued by conflicting efforts from various entities as well as a lack of consistency in the goals and standards across the Bay watershed. At the same time, without an independent evaluator to monitor the clean-up effort, it has been impossible to accurately gauge whether resources and labor are being used in the most effective way. My Bay bill would enhance coordination, flexibility, and efficiency of restoration efforts. Similar efforts have been used successfully in other conservation projects, such as in the Florida Everglades and the Great Lakes, and I believe their introduction into the Bay effort would produce powerful results for a clean and healthy Chesapeake Bay. My bill would also create a Chesapeake Bay Program Independent Evaluator who would review the cleanup effort and report to Congress on the progress of restoration activities. An external evaluator is vital to ensure that efforts by one entity in the watershed are not canceling out the efforts of another, as we have seen in the past.

My bill passed the House of Representatives in 2009 by a vote of 418-1 but was not introduced in the Senate before the end of the 111th Session of Congress. This time around, however, Senators Warner and Webb have introduced my bill in the Senate, and I am hopeful that it will be passed by the Senate and subsequently signed into law. Cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and preserving it for use and enjoyment by future generations is one of my chief goals in Congress. Last year, I co-founded the Congressional Chesapeake Bay Watershed Caucus so

that members from the Chesapeake Bay watershed region would have a forum to discuss issues related to the Bay and Bay cleanup. Saving the Bay is a bipartisan goal that is shared by folks from all walks of life, and it is critical that we work together to protect and preserve this vital cultural and economic backbone of our region.

I was also pleased this week as a renewable energy bill I authored passed through the House. The Advancing Offshore Wind Production Act (H.R. 2173) passed with support from both sides of the aisle as part of the Domestic Energy and Jobs Act (H.R. 4480) on June 21. This bill proposes to speed up the development of offshore wind energy resources off Virginia's coast without compromising our natural resources. Utilizing all sources of American energy is essential to reducing U.S. reliance on foreign oil and pursuing a responsible, comprehensive energy policy for our nation.

I hope that you will all continue to stay in touch as the summer goes on. I can be reached via telephone at (202) 225-4261, on my website (www.wittman.house.gov), through Facebook (www.facebook.com/reprobwittman), or 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.