

**Washington D.C.** – Today, Congressman Rob Wittman submitted remarks for the Congressional Record expressing his outrage over the lack of protection for the health programs provided to veterans, servicemembers and their families in the healthcare reform bill to be considered by the House this evening.

The proposed legislation does not recognize all of the health care plans currently offered to servicemembers, veterans and their dependents as “acceptable coverage” or “minimum essential coverage” as required by the mandate that every individual have insurance coverage in the bill text. Wittman, who represents tens of thousands veterans and their families, as well as a number of military installations, noted that if the legislation passes this evening those constituents, “will be at risk of having their insurance plans being deemed ‘unacceptable’ and therefore have to purchase supplemental insurance or obtain a new plan altogether”.

*The Full text of Wittman’s extended remarks follow below:*

M. Speaker, I rise today to share my outrage about the lack of protection for health programs provided to veterans, servicemembers or their families in the health reform bill under consideration by the House of Representatives.

This bill is deeply flawed. It covers TRICARE for Life but leaves out the other TRICARE programs that serve 9.2 million beneficiaries.

Any health care reform legislation must explicitly protect TRICARE and all other Defense or Veterans Department health plans by including them in the definition of “acceptable” or “minimum essential coverage”.

If the health care reform package under consideration today by the House of Representatives passes, millions of servicemembers, veterans, and their dependents across the Nation will be at risk of having their insurance plan being deemed “unacceptable” and therefore have to purchase supplemental insurance or obtain a new plan altogether.

The tens of thousands of servicemembers, veterans and their dependents in the First Congressional District of Virginia have made great sacrifices for our Nation. I have long held the belief that the benefits afforded our men and women in uniform have been earned through sacrifice and hardship.

The TRICARE and Veterans (VA) health care systems are unique and are designed to fulfill certain requirements that are not shared by the private sector. We must respect the unique identity and role of the military TRICARE and VA health delivery systems.

Now is not the time to change either the terms under which our service members defend our country or the means by which we continue to care for those that have served.

I cannot support legislation that does not uphold this Nation's commitment to our men and women in uniform, our veterans and their families.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*