

*Congressman Rob Wittman and Congressman Scott Rigell*

April 9, 2011

In response to “ [Logic, not hype, on offshore drilling](#) ,” (April 4, 2011):

The simple truth is Virginia can and will benefit from policies promoting job creation and American energy production.

As a scientist and a small business owner, we bring distinct environmental and economic perspectives on this issue. We also acknowledge that this is only one component of a comprehensive energy plan that includes renewable, sustainable sources of energy to not only lower prices but to create more certainty in the energy that Americans need to prosper each day. We will work diligently to pursue these other sources of energy in the future.

Virginia can lead the way in a safe, environmentally responsible manner, learning from the lessons of the Gulf's Deepwater Horizon disaster. Since the incident happened last spring, government and private industry have taken significant steps to reform and improve the safety of American energy production off our shores. The new federal agency charged with this oversight recently testified that they “established heightened standards for drilling practices, safety equipment, and environmental safeguards.” Under these new standards, drilling is once again being permitted in the Gulf of Mexico.

Developing Virginia's oil and natural gas resources would create good-paying jobs and positively impact state and local economies. A recent study concluded that offshore energy production off our coast would create nearly 2,000 jobs in Virginia and generate \$19.5 billion in federal, state and local revenues. The Department of Interior has calculated that Virginia could produce 500 million barrels of oil and 2.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Both are welcome figures during these challenging economic times.

In addition, we are already working to ensure the monetary benefits of energy production are realized. Similar to the Gulf Coast states, the Commonwealth deserves a share in revenue generated from offshore energy production. A study by the South East Energy Alliance estimated that Virginia could receive up to \$250 million annually in revenue sharing.

With the recent suspension of business at the Yorktown Refinery, Virginians know too well the loss of good-paying industrial jobs right here at home. Increased offshore domestic energy production would create good-paying jobs, promote a reduction in gas prices and put us on a path toward energy independence.

Vast natural resources both onshore and offshore provide America an opportunity to produce more energy here at home. By removing barriers to American energy production we chose to stimulate our economy and reduce our reliance on foreign countries for our energy security.

There is a clear link between our willingness to tap American energy resources with job creation and national security. This initiative will create a bridge to the future as Americans continue innovations to create a sustainable, secure energy future for our country.