

WASHINGTON, DC – Renewable energy legislation authored by Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1) was passed through the U.S. House Committee process today, with a vote in the House Natural Resources Committee to move the legislation to the House Floor. H.R. 2173, the *Advancing Offshore Wind Production Act*, would streamline the process for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to approve temporary infrastructure, such as towers or buoys, to test and develop offshore wind power in the Outer Continental Shelf.

“We must continue to develop energy for this country, and allow innovators to develop clean energy by removing unnecessary government over-regulation,” Wittman said. “I am a strong proponent of an all-of-the-above energy policy, and with gasoline at nearly four dollars a gallon, every option should be on the table. As a scientist by trade, I understand the need to achieve a balance, to foster development of American energy while at the same time protecting the integrity of our environment. We can achieve both efficiency and protection, and this bill helps us achieve both goals.”

Offshore wind energy is an important component furthering development of clean, renewable American energy sources. The process is often unnecessarily slowed for years by bureaucratic hurdles in the permitting process. While it is critical that energy development is safe and environmentally friendly, the process must become more efficient. H.R. 2173 will speed the production wind energy, as it sets a 30-day timeline for the Secretary of the Interior to act on permits for all weather testing and monitoring projects in the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. This bill will also streamline the environmental review process needed to place temporary infrastructure as long as the project is removed within five years, causes less than one acre of disruption at the location of each tower or device and causes no more than 5 acres of seafloor disruption within the proposed area for the project. The bill also requires coordination with the Department of Defense and other affected agencies so the projects do not disrupt national security, or other critical projects. This provision is especially important for the Commonwealth of Virginia, with its active defense community.

H.R. 2173 was part of a larger, four-bill legislative effort to streamline unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles to the efficient development of solar, wind, and geothermal renewable energy technologies on federal lands and waters. The House Natural Resources Committee today also passed the three additional bills, H.R. 2170, H.R. 2171 and H.R. 1272. The four pieces of legislation were endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who stated in a June 22, 2011 letter, “This suite of bills would accelerate the permitting process for new renewable energy projects, cutting down on costly bureaucratic delays and creating jobs.”

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.