WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives today passed the National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 4310, which includes a measure authored by Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1) to bolster the structure of leadership at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC). The measure places a commissioned officer of the United States Military in Charge of Army National Cemeteries, which includes ANC, to provide for greater accountability following the reports of mismanagement that surfaced in 2010. Wittman, Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, has focused efforts on oversight in subcommittee hearings of the efforts to modernize and fix errors at ANC.

“The men and women of our all-volunteer force who fall in combat, and those who serve who chose to be buried at Arlington deserve the honor of having a uniformed commanding officer to watch over them as they rest, to set and enforce a standard of military excellence, commitment, honor and integrity that only those serving in uniform can fully comprehend,” Wittman said. “The scandals and embarrassments that rocked Arlington went largely unprosecuted for one reason: no one in the former chain of command was held accountable for their actions and their gross negligence and mismanagement because none of those in the direct chain of command were commissioned military officers, meaning none of them were subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I believe the best way forward for Arlington is to place a commissioned military officer as the military commander and director of the Army National Cemeteries, and am pleased the House has agreed by passing this measure unanimously.”

“Our heroes buried at these cemeteries run by the Department of the Army deserve the honor of having their last leader and commanding officer held to military standards of excellence and accountability to ensure that the unconscionable mistakes and crimes that occurred in the past at Arlington are never repeated.”

During the 112th Congress, the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee and the Military Personnel Subcommittee have held two joint hearings on the past mismanagement by previous leadership and current efforts to fix errors and modernize systems at ANC. Additionally, for a period of six months the leadership of these two subcommittees were briefed on a monthly basis by the Executive Director of Army National Cemeteries on the progress being made at ANC to correct decades of neglect and poor leadership and management. Mr. Wittman believes current ANC leadership has made significant progress fixing a broken system and correcting egregious errors by past leadership.

Under the measure, current leadership would remain in place until their tenure ends. The House

passed the Defense Authorization bill by a vote of 299-120, and it now heads to the Senate for its consideration.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First Congressional District of Virginia.