

First, the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, announced the key decisions on Monday that he will recommend to the President concerning the fiscal year 2010 defense budget. Particularly, I am deeply concerned by Secretary Gates' recommendation to decrease the number of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers to 10. There is a legal requirement to maintain our carrier force at 11, and without a sufficient change in the National Defense Strategy, the Quadrennial Defense Review, and the Global Navy Force Presence Plan, I cannot support or justify this shift in requirements.

In this era of fiscal largess in all other areas, it is disappointing that the Administration would show fiscal restraint in the only area that we are constitutionally-bound to provide: the common defense of this great nation. I look forward to continuing to work with the Administration and with my colleagues across the aisle to combat these cuts that would hurt the 1st District of Virginia and our nation.

Next, I have continued my opposition to the Navy's decision to shift the home-porting of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier from Norfolk, VA to Mayport, FL. I, along with eighteen Congressmen from both sides of the aisle, penned a letter to President Obama to review this decision. It appears that the bipartisan letter along with ongoing conversations and correspondence from me and other Members of Congress has yielded a positive development in Virginia's favor regarding the carrier move. Just Thursday afternoon, I spoke with Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn, the Department of Defense's (DoD) second in command. Lynn informed me that the Department of Defense has decided to postpone the movement of a nuclear aircraft carrier from Norfolk, VA to Mayport, FL until the completion of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). This coincides with my statements over the past several months during Armed Services Committee hearings: I believe this decision should be based on the strategic defense needs of this nation as identified in the QDR. While this development is a positive one, the process is still not over, and I will continue to fight against this proposed move.

I am grateful to get back home to visit with folks this week and next as Congress continues its District Work period. I have had some wonderful meetings with groups, individual constituents as well as the informal situations where I get to see people at the grocery store or the gas pump. It is important for me to hear your ideas and concerns, and I look forward to bringing them back with me when I return to Washington.

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.