

I heard from a number of business owners that they were frustrated with some of the processes at the Small Business Administration (SBA). Particularly, with regard to their interactions with banks that have made it difficult to secure lending. This issue stems from a large amount of paperwork which has to be completed for loan origination. While there is not legislation pending to solve this issue, we on Capitol Hill are looking at ways to improve the system at the SBA.

With such a large concentration of defense and government facilities in our district, business owners are also concerned with current contracting practices and acquisition reform. The problem develops when it comes to what work may be performed by a contractor based on the total cost and benefit to a governmental agency. In fact, there is a 60 page definition of what those costs and benefits must be. We must find a simpler solution to this issue, rather than creating an avenue for confusion. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I have questioned senior members of the Department of Defense on this issue and will continue to call for a balanced approach as we work towards a resolution.

Lastly, many small business owners expressed serious concern with the current state of healthcare and Congressional plans to reform the system. Some have suggested allowing businesses to form co-ops to pool risk and reduce cost burdens, something I have been advocating for as we debate health reform. Many folks are unaware that when you change jobs, you may be subject to increased premiums or denial of coverage with your new employer. Through the discussions on legislation, I will work to help ensure continuity of coverage between employers.

This first meeting laid the groundwork for a direct line for concerns of small businesses to be heard in Congress. I will continue to listen to their thoughts and concerns as we work on legislation to streamline government operations and reforming healthcare.

*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.*

