

In fact, this past Wednesday I had the opportunity to question the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar on where Virginia stands in the process of being approved for offshore energy development. Currently, we should be the first in line along the Atlantic seaboard to be approved for offshore energy development in the Outer Continental Shelf. I indicated to the Secretary that offshore drilling and renewable energy development such as wind power, could lead to the creation of 25,000 new jobs and make the Commonwealth a leader in energy production.

The Secretary noted that there is still work to be done in the mapping of locations suitable for offshore drilling and that indeed Virginia could also stand to benefit from offshore natural gas exploration. I was pleased to hear that he agreed with my sentiments and that we can come together to see this goal become a reality.

This issue transcends party lines; an energy independent Commonwealth and Nation makes us stronger on the world stage and insulates us from the threat of our supplies being cut off by unfriendly nations. Additionally, the job creation from such development would create a new and permanent field of employment for many in the Tidewater region. I remain committed to seeing that Virginia reaps the benefits of offshore energy development and that the First Congressional District becomes a leader in energy development and job creation.

*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.*