

This past Monday I toured the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) at Hampton. This Veterans Hospital, the fourth oldest medical center in the VA system, is a 468-bed facility which serves a 15-county area in eastern Virginia and a 10-county area in northeastern North Carolina. I received a brief tour of the center, a briefing from hospital administrators, and met with both patients and doctors. I learned more about how the medical center was working to serve patients and asked what I can do in Washington to help improve the services they provide.

The capabilities at this Medical Center in Hampton are extensive. These facilities include: extended care, primary care, a pharmacy that fills over 2,500 prescriptions daily, and one of the largest Spinal Cord Injury Centers in the VA system. As we know, the nature of modern combat has led to an increase in spinal injuries and the Hampton Center is playing a large role in supporting our wounded warriors, and assisting them to regain their functional abilities. Meeting the patients in this portion of the facility was both humbling and inspiring; I thanked them on behalf of our nation for their service and sacrifice and that of their family's.

The larger mission of VAMC Hampton is to provide the care we've promised to our nation's veterans. I met a range of patients from service members recently discharged to senior citizens. I was pleased to hear that many were satisfied with their care, but there were some complaints as well. To the credit of the staff and administration at the Center, they have instituted a number of reforms to improve the quality of care and the experience of those receiving care. Like any other health care system across our country, the Center suffers from a deficit of care providers. Increasing the number of doctors and nurses is the key to decreasing wait times.

I'd like to thank the VAMC Hampton staff, administration, and most of all, patients, for taking the time to speak with me throughout my visit. Getting their feedback is critical to the work I do in Washington, and identifying opportunities for improving the VA system. I remain committed to doing everything I possibly can for our nation's veterans and their families.

*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.*