

Last week Congress was out of session for the July 4th Independence Day District Work Period, and I enjoyed the chance to spend time visiting with constituents and hearing more about what is on their minds and how I can better serve them.

On Tuesday, I had the opportunity to join several pastors and educators in Fredericksburg for a joint meeting of my First District Pastors and Education Advisory Councils. The Council members met with representatives from the Department of Education to discuss building partnerships to better serve communities by bringing together faith-based and neighborhood organizations with existing groups.

These partnerships are critical, and it is important to coordinate resources so that they complement rather than hinder each other. It was a productive meeting, and the Council members are going to meet again soon to discuss the possibility of forming a taskforce of representatives from education, community, and faith-based organizations to open communications and provide awareness of local challenges. If you are interested in getting involved with my Pastors or Education Advisory Councils, please call my Yorktown office at (757) 874-6687.

Last week I also had the opportunity to visit AREVA Newport News, a company that manufactures components for nuclear power plants. AREVA partnered up with Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding to build a fantastic facility that will create over 250 private sector jobs on the Peninsula. This is great news not only for the Hampton Roads economy, but also for our energy security.

Nuclear power is clean and affordable, and it should be an important part of our comprehensive energy policy. With so many concerns about clean air and greenhouse gas emissions, nuclear power is a safe and reliable carbon emission free source of electric power. Many countries are rapidly developing their nuclear industries, including China, which is expected to complete 22 nuclear energy reactors this year and has plans for over 100 additional reactors in the near future. The United States, on the other hand, hasn't ordered a new reactor since 1978.

Currently, about one third of Virginia's electricity is supplied by nuclear power, and our energy demands are expected to significantly increase in the next few decades. I believe that in order to meet these challenges, we need a comprehensive energy policy that relies on

American-made resources, including nuclear energy, natural gas, oil, coal, and renewable and alternative sources such as wind and solar power. Nuclear energy is a reliable source of electricity, both environmentally and economically, and I enjoyed the opportunity to visit the folks at AREVA Newport News who are making this power source a reality.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*