

This week I visited local businesses, discussing job creation and speaking with many local employers from America's First District. Their message was clear that what's coming out of Washington, DC, is not helping the atmosphere for small businesses looking to expand and create jobs.

On Tuesday, I toured several small businesses in Historic Fredericksburg to discuss the economy, and the effects of Federal legislation on the Fredericksburg business climate. It was great to have the chance to speak with local business owners and their employees and ask what their concerns and needs are as a small business with the state of our economy. One of the retail store owners emphasized their top concern is the cost of health care. Another talked of the need to focus on local issues, such as development to attract visitors and the need for improved transportation options. Others talked of the need for simply creating an atmosphere of growth.

Discussion of jobs and the economy continued as I visited with the Southern Fauquier Business Owners Association on Tuesday evening. There we also discussed the concerns of business owners as they work to grow their companies and create more jobs during these challenging economic times. I also hosted a Small Business Seminar on Wednesday in Heathsville, at which local bankers and lawyers provided advice to small business owners.

In a few short weeks, Congress will return to Washington with important items on the agenda. Some of the recent legislation coming out of Washington is making it tough for America's entrepreneurs to have the confidence they need to expand operations, hire new employees or offer competitive wages. Small businesses need certainty to succeed; they cannot thrive under the constant threat of higher taxes and more bureaucratic red tape. With the current tax rates set to expire at the end of the year, action is needed to keep taxes low for individuals, families and businesses. As families continue to struggle with everyday expenses, we must continue to provide tax relief for families, and those businesses that employ them. I support keeping taxes low, and will fight in Congress for measures that: reduce the capital gains and dividends taxes, cut the payroll tax rate and the self-employed tax rate, lower the corporate tax rate, and extend the '01 and '03 tax cuts. I can't tell you how many times small business owners, tell me the best thing the government can do is just get out of the way.

One of the hardest-hit segments of the population especially during tough economic times are individuals with disabilities. That's why I am organizing a job fair for individuals with disabilities. Save the date for October 18 to join us at the University of Mary Washington's Stafford

Campus. The job fair will feature over 50 employers, and will provide those with disabilities the opportunity to seek employment, learn more about the employment process, enhance their interview skills and receive resume assistance.

As always, please feel free to share your thoughts and ideas with me on the best solutions to this nation's challenges. Please feel free to contact me by email on my website, <http://wittman.house.gov> or at 202-225-4261.

*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.*