

This week, Congress came to Washington again without taking action on the tax relief that our economy - and families - need. With tax rates scheduled to rise at the end of the year if Congress doesn't take action, I will continue to advocate that taxes not be raised as families and businesses work to regain steady financial footing.

On Wednesday, the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing to receive testimony from officials at the Department of Defense on their assessment of the quality of education programs available to off-duty service members using government-provided tuition assistance. This year, about 380,000 military personnel will utilize this program to further their education. These incentives are an important pillar of our Armed Services, especially with the end of the draft and the advent of an all-volunteer force more than 40 years ago. The increased level of education attained by our service members benefits not only the individual but the services themselves where nearly all of the approved courses can be applied to a military job environment.

As a co-chair of the Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus, I was pleased to host the Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral Robert J. Papp, at a Caucus meeting on Thursday morning. The Commandant was very frank in his discussion about the future of the Coast Guard, and the challenges that his service faces as budgets are reduced in the years to come. The First District is proud to have the Yorktown Coast Guard Training Center, and I will continue to advocate for a properly resourced Coast Guard that can fulfill its mission to our Homeland Security. I am glad to have a strong new partner in that effort with Admiral Papp.

Thursday brought the unveiling of the new Pledge to America. This new governing agenda authored by House Republicans focuses on solutions that can be implemented immediately to tackle the issues that are most important to Virginians and the nation, including job creation, spending restraint, national security, health care, and reform of Congress itself. Instead of Washington dictating what must be done, we instead are listening to you and putting forth your priorities for the future of this country. I am continually humbled by this opportunity to serve as your representative. But with that opportunity comes the responsibility to ensure that the voice of Virginians are heard in Washington. And through my travels across the First District, the top issue remains the recovery of our economy. This agenda focuses on incentivizing job creation by small businesses and keeping taxes low to create certainty and an atmosphere for job growth. Most importantly, this agenda proposes to restore and promote the freedoms that America was founded upon and Americans deserve. You can read more about it at <http://pledge.gop.gov>

And as always, please share your thoughts with me via email on my website, <http://wittman.house.gov>

, or call my office 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.*