

This week I heard from small business owners looking for relief in today's economy as they seek to expand their enterprise and hire more folks. With energy prices on the rise our business community will face even greater challenges in generating the dollars necessary to create new jobs. Small businesses are the backbone of this nation's economy and are the principal employer in the First District. They create over 70% of the new jobs nationwide every year. It is important that Congress focus on how government can enhance, not inhibit, job growth and create a path for innovation and success.

Congress should focus on enhancing the success and freedom of our small businesses. This is what's going to get our economy back on track and put individuals back to work. I was proud to support a measure to repeal a burdensome regulation created in the health care overhaul law last year. This past Thursday the House passed H.R. 4 - The Small Business Paperwork Mandate Elimination Act of 2011 and has sent it to the Senate for consideration. Removing the burden of massive and repeated government form filing will greatly help small business to operate efficiently and can put them on the path to getting Virginians back to work.

This week I also had the opportunity to question the Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar about the production of energy here in the United States. Additionally we asked about what progress has been made to preserve habitat in the Chesapeake Bay. We absolutely must do more to produce our own energy here in this country. We have not clearly identified a plan for our future energy needs so we can chart a course that assures an affordable and sustainable supply for our nation. I support an "all of the above" energy plan. Our focus must be on developing all of our domestic resources to end our current dependence on foreign oil. Also we need to concentrate on expanding the use and development of clean nuclear power and developing solar, wind, and other renewable energy. Building a bridge with existing energy sources to these future resources while planning and executing their development will create jobs in the Commonwealth and across the Nation. This effort will also end our dependence on fossil fuels from abroad. The Secretary failed to provide a clear path to develop a comprehensive effort to develop all of energy sources; this is an issue I will continue to press especially as we see prices climb higher at the pump. I joined over 50 of my colleagues in sending a letter urging the President and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to take immediate action to ensure America's energy security by expediting the permitting process for safe offshore energy exploration and development. It is critical to receive your feedback, input and questions as your Representative in Congress. Please do not hesitate to call (202-225-4261) or email me on my website, www.wittman.house.gov to share your ideas and opinions.