

Just as I was finishing my latest weekly update, the news of the death of Osama bin Laden spread across the country. With this announcement, America marks a major victory in the war on terror: that the world's most wanted terrorist and the mastermind behind the September 11, 2001 attacks and the bombing of the Norfolk-based USS Cole (DDG 67) on October 12, 2000, was killed by American forces. Americans stand together proudly with a job well done by our military and intelligence communities. We honor the lives lost of those fighting to defend freedom and see justice served for nearly a decade. For those innocent victims killed at the hand of this terrorist in New York, Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon – justice has been done. Yet, this does not mark an end to the conflict with those who wish to do harm to our country; we must remain vigilant in fighting for the cause of American liberty. God bless our all volunteer force, their families, and may God continue to bless those standing watch in harm's way keeping our great nation safe and free.

During my time in Congress, I have been pleased to see so many of you and other Americans across the country showing a heightened interest in the future of this nation. This participation is a critical part of our democracy, as educated and engaged citizens are essential for holding our government accountable. For many Americans, their interest in government begins in school. I was honored this week to visit several schools in the First District to speak with civics and government classes. Our discussions covered a wide range of topics, including the future of education and the national debt and federal budget, and it was exciting to experience so many young people taking an interest in the important business of governing. Many students asked very thoughtful and in-depth questions and demonstrated an outstanding knowledge of government. Actions in Washington, D.C., greatly affect the future of our youth, and it is important that we instill in them an interest in preserving the freedoms and ideals that we hold dear in the United States.

I always enjoy interacting with young folks in the First District. One of the ways that high school youth can interact directly on issues of interest is by joining the First District Congressional Youth Forum. The Congressional Youth Forum is a group of civic-minded students interested in learning more about their government, public policy and the law making process. This Forum meets periodically during the school year and provides students the unique opportunity to listen to guest speakers and engage in discussions about important issues and current events.

The Congressional Youth Forum's first event of the 112th Congress takes place on May 9, 2011 at 7PM, at the University of Mary Washington Stafford Campus, University Hall, in Fredericksburg. During one of the Youth Forum discussions held last spring, many students mentioned the importance of social media and its impact on their lives. Facebook is currently the most-used social network service in the world, and for that reason, I have invited representatives from Facebook to discuss online safety and how to engage safely on a social network such as Facebook. This conversation will help social media users understand how to use social technology appropriately, as well as prepare students for a global society driven by social media technology. At the same time, this is a great opportunity for students to join my Congressional Youth Forum and to connect with individuals who work directly for Facebook. This forum is open to the public, but I especially encourage all high school students, parents, educators and administrators in the First Congressional District to attend.

As we reflect on the importance of our nation's young people, we remember April is the Month of the Military Child. The strength and resiliency that the children of our service men and women demonstrate is inspiring. I strive to do everything possible to ensure our nation's young people have the support and guidance needed in order to succeed. I always look forward to hearing from folks directly, and if you are interested in meeting with me or the First District staff, or having us visit your organization, please contact my office through the website, www.wittman.house.gov, or call the D.C. office at 202-225-4261. We would love to hear from you on the critical issues affecting this nation. I have enjoyed spending time with so many great folks in the First District over the last two weeks, but I am also eager to continue the efforts in Washington, D.C., to bring our federal spending under control and facilitate an environment of job creation and prosperity in America.

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