

This week Congress considered an important bill: a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution. Just as families throughout the First District and America make hard choices about priorities in their household budgets, I believe Congress must also act both decisively and responsibly to address our Nation's growing debt and deficit, and this includes passing a balanced budget to fund our government. On Friday, the House of Representatives voted on House Joint Resolution 2, which was introduced by my fellow Virginia Representative, Bob Goodlatte. This legislation would propose a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution and establish a limit on annual federal spending, while at the same time requiring a majority vote by Congress to raise taxes. Additionally, H.J.Res. 2 would require a 3/5 vote by Congress to raise the public debt limit. Unfortunately, this legislation did not receive the two-thirds majority vote necessary for passage. I am deeply frustrated at the inability of Congress to come together on legislation that will help put our nation on a path toward fiscal responsibility; however, I will continue to push for a Balanced Budget Amendment to our Constitution, as well as fiscal accountability in Washington.

I also had a chance this week to directly question Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar on the Administration's failure to allow Virginia to explore its own energy resources. In its Five Year Plan for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program, the Administration denied Virginia the opportunity to create jobs and bring in revenues from new, environmentally safe sources of energy. Despite widespread support across the Commonwealth for offshore energy exploration from federal, state, and local leaders, this decision effectively bans energy development off the coast of Virginia. During a Natural Resources Committee hearing on Wednesday, I was able to express to Secretary Salazar my belief that excluding Virginia from this Five Year Plan eliminates an opportunity for us to responsibly develop our resources off the coast, which has a significant economic impact on the area, both in terms of lost revenue and employment opportunities. I also joined this week with several other members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation in a letter to Secretary Salazar urging him to reconsider including Virginia in the Five Year Plan. I will continue to pursue safe offshore energy development rights for the Commonwealth of Virginia. (You can view the letter ([here](#)) and a video of our exchange [here](#).)

On Thursday, a bill I introduced (H.R. 3117) was passed out of the Committee on Natural Resources by a unanimous vote. This legislation, the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act, streamlines a system for sportsmen, by allowing states to issue an electronic version of the federal duck stamp. This bill is a bipartisan effort to bring cost effectiveness to a system used by the many Americans who purchase conservation stamps for hunting or stamp collecting. I am pleased that my fellow members of the Natural Resources Committee supported this common-sense legislation, and I look forward to its consideration by the full House of Representatives.

As always, I encourage you to keep in touch with me via my website (www.wittman.house.gov), or by phone at (202) 225-4261.