

This past week we watched as the war in Iraq formally concluded. We saw the U.S. Flag being lowered and cased in a symbolic gesture to end our military mission in Iraq. Over the last nine years, the dedication and perseverance of our servicemen and women have brought about a significant security improvement in Iraq and in the region as a whole. However, too many of our bravest citizens were wounded or gave the ultimate sacrifice during this conflict, and so we must ensure that their sacrifices were not in vain. It is my hope that the United States will continue to work with the Iraqi government to guarantee stability and to prevent the return of violent extremism that could threaten the delicate balance of peace in that country. At the same time, let us always keep in mind the Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen who have sacrificed so much over the course of the last nine years. Many National Guard troops are returning to Virginia this month, including approximately 120 soldiers who reunited with their friends and family in Fredericksburg this past week. Welcome home, and thank you for your sacrifice.

One way to support our servicemen and women is to craft a responsible and effective National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to fund our military. This bill is passed each year to set the funding levels for the Department of Defense. On Wednesday, I was proud to support the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, which ensures that the brave members of our Armed Forces have the tools and resources they need to accomplish their missions. This legislation was passed by the Senate on Thursday, and currently awaits the President's signature. This bill authorizes a modest 1.6% pay increase, but it never can express how truly grateful we are as a nation for the service and sacrifice of our all-volunteer force and their families. Additionally, some very important provisions were included to ensure our industrial base maintains a constant work load and a fully employed work force. \$14.9 billion was authorized for U.S. Navy shipbuilding, a total of 10 ships, which include two Virginia Class submarines, which will partially be built in the Newport News shipyard. This is great for national security, and the security of the workforce at the shipyard. Unfortunately, some of the discussion about the NDAA has been overshadowed by misinformation in the media about certain provisions involving the detention of Al Qaeda terrorists. I'm concerned about the circulation of misinformation; the NDAA does not supersede the Constitution and does not change the laws already on the books with regard to the treatment of U.S. citizens. The simple truth is that I would not and do not support any attempt to deny a U.S. citizen his constitutional right to due process under the Fifth Amendment. The NDAA does not compromise these rights; instead, it specifically ensures that U.S. citizens would not be subject to the requirement that captured foreign terrorists be held in military custody. Americans deserve their civil liberties as defined in our Constitution, and they also deserve to be protected from terrorists who wish to harm this country. I believe that we can meet both objectives. For more of my thoughts on the NDAA, please read my statement [here](#)

Finally, on Friday, the House of Representatives considered the conference report to the FY12 Consolidated and Continuing Appropriations Act, a bill to fund the federal government through the end of the fiscal year. While I support many of the provisions in this legislation, I voted against this bill. As I've said in the past, I simply do not feel that it is responsible to fund the government through an "omnibus" piece of legislation that combines multiple appropriations bills. Federal budget decisions should be made through open debate and through clear, detailed examination of each area in the budget. The constituents of America's First District consistently remind me that government spending has got to be transparent so that Congress can be accountable to the American taxpayer. This massive spending legislation is simply another example of Washington's broken process.

As always, I appreciate your engagement on the issues. I encourage you to keep in touch with me via my website (www.wittman.house.gov), by phone (202-225-4261), on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/RobWittman>), or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/RepRobWittman). My very best to you and yours in this wonderful holiday season.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.