

WASHINGTON, DC – As I drove to Washington from Montross last week, I watched as the odometer in my 2005 Toyota Corolla ticked closer and closer to 300,000 miles. At the 299,999 mark, the odometer simply stopped moving, even though I continued to drive, mile after mile. A trip to the mechanic told me that my odometer simply wouldn't go any higher and that it would have to be reset back to zero. Despite not being able to see the 300,000 mile mark on my dashboard, I'm still satisfied to have gotten such great use out of this car. In fact, I can't help but think that just a few months ago, I was told to scrap my reliable Corolla and find something new. My Corolla sustained some damage on a stormy evening this past 4th of July. Another vehicle collided with mine and that driver's insurance company classified my vehicle as "totaled." However, I knew that my car had plenty of miles left to drive, and so I bought the car back from the insurance company, fixed it and put it back on the road, after ensuring it was safe. Since then, my Corolla has continued to carry me to meetings and events all over America's First District.

Even though the insurance company encouraged me to scrap my car, I had confidence that it could still do the job. As the old saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I can't say the same for Congress, though. Congress is broken, and it needs fixing. Just this week, the Gallup organization released results of a poll that asked 600 small businesses about the factors that affect their hiring decisions. 46% of these small businesses said that fears about new government regulations are a significant concern. Another 48% acknowledged that rising health care costs were keeping them from adding new folks to their payrolls. These results highlight the impact that uncertainty has on our economy and its ability to recover. But despite the obvious negative effects of uncertainty on small businesses and job creators, leaders in the Senate have signaled that they will not pursue budget legislation this year, one of the basic functions of the Congress as directed by our Constitution. This lack of a basic blueprint for the federal government makes it considerably harder for small businesses, health care providers, and even state and local government entities to prepare their own budgets. I believe we've all got to work together to ensure that this country returns to an atmosphere of growth and economic prosperity. Responsible governing is such a critical part of this effort, and the process must begin with Congress passing a responsible, efficient, and effective budget that funds the necessary functions of this country in order to cultivate an environment of increased certainty for job creators in the United States. I am hopeful that as the budget process progresses over the next few months, elected officials in our government will do their duty in governing responsibly.

Fiscal prosperity isn't going to be preserved or sustained simply through a federal budget. We count on the innovators in this country to live their dreams, to start their own business or invent something that changes lives. A significant part in ensuring future economic growth in this country and encouraging dreams is our education system. We must ensure that our schools are effectively preparing our students for their future careers. This past week, I had a great meeting with my Education Advisory Council in Fredericksburg, where we discussed various issues including student productivity, teacher performance, and the role of the federal government in our overall education system including legislation to replace the No Child Left Behind Act. I received great feedback from the folks at the meeting, each of whom has valuable experience with various aspects of our education system. As the 112th Session of Congress continues, I look forward to pursuing effective educational reform as well as supporting other efforts to promote and sustain an environment of economic growth and prosperity in our nation.

I always appreciate your thoughts and opinions on the important issues facing our Commonwealth and nation. Please 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).