

Virginia's First District is a region with a strong military history, where battles have been fought in the past and in which many of our brave men and women are currently being trained to become part of the finest fighting force on the planet. From Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown in 1781 to the battle for Marye's Heights in Fredericksburg in 1862, our region has seen many sacrifices by Americans defending their families and their rights. In the last decade, the horrible pain of war has touched many in our area personally, and we are deeply in debt to those brave souls who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country in places around the world such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Their sacrifices can never be repaid.

Too many of us have relatives or ancestors whose dedicated service to this nation ended in tragedy. I believe that it is important to always remember these folks' brave sacrifices on behalf of our freedoms, and I am humbled to take part in several events this weekend to recognize Memorial Day. And while I understand the enjoyment that comes with a three day weekend, I hope that we all remember the powerful significance of this day and the important sacrifices that have been made in defense of our freedoms by the brave men and women of our armed forces, both past and present.

In my role on the House Armed Services Committee, I am committed to ensuring that our men and women in uniform have all of the resources and training that they need to complete their missions safely, effectively, and efficiently. I also believe that our fallen heroes' memories should be respected to the highest degree. Recently, as part of consideration of this year's National Defense Authorization Act, I introduced an amendment which would establish a military officer within the chain of command at Arlington National Cemetery, to be in charge of the entire installation. The past incompetencies that were discovered at Arlington were unconscionable and completely disrespectful of the brave men and women buried on that hallowed ground. I believe it is critical that the person in charge of Arlington be held accountable, to the same standards as the members of our military. Our brave heroes buried there will remain under the care of an eternal commanding officer. I was pleased that this measure had the support of the House of Representatives, and remain hopeful that the Senate will support this measure also, to send it to the President for his signature. In my role as chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, I have spent a good deal of time examining the mismanagement at Arlington National Cemetery and what can be done to prevent that in the future. As this measure continues to move through the legislative process, I will continue to fight to ensure that our fallen soldiers at Arlington are able to rest with the respect and dignity that they deserve.

As our country recognizes our fallen heroes on Memorial Day, we thank the families and survivors of those who we have lost in battle, and in service to this great nation. We are forever

indebted to these brave individuals and their families. We can never forget their stories and their sacrifice. And to those servicemen and women currently down range, and their families, we thank each of you for your devotion to this nation and to the cause of liberty. Your bravery, determination, and loyalty will never cease to be a guiding light for this country.

*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.*