

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1) today voted in the House Armed Services Committee in favor of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012.

“This bill is not perfect. I remain adamantly opposed to raising TRICARE fees or premiums on our veterans. Our veterans should not be the first folks we turn to to pay for our budget problems. I have long held the belief that the benefits afforded our men and women in uniform have been earned through sacrifice and hardship. Of the benefits provided to our military retirees, one of the most important is the medical benefit. It is our job to protect the TRICARE system now and for future generations, as it is unique and designed to fulfill certain requirements that are not shared by the private sector,” said Wittman. “However, I ultimately voted for the Defense Authorization bill today because I believe it is imperative to provide for our nation’s heroes – the men and women serving all over the world in harm’s way and in defense of freedom. This bill includes many important provisions to ensure that our service members and their families have the resources and support they need and deserve. It also mandates more efficient use of taxpayer dollars by the DoD, requiring improvements to the Pentagon’s accounting and financial management systems and the reliability of DoD Financial Statements.”

In addition, Congressman Wittman successfully offered the following provisions which were included in the bill that was reported out of Committee:

Arlington National Cemetery Amendment

This amendment puts in place a strict timeline in which the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery is to meet and provide recommendations to the Secretary of the Army on how to solve the problems with the mismanaged graves. It also sets a deadline for the Secretary of the Army to report back to Congress on the Advisory Committee’s recommendations. Lastly, the amendment requires the Army to convert all records related to internments or inurnments to a digitized format by June 1, 2012.

“Arlington National Cemetery is our most sacred ground, where our heroes are buried, and we owe them the utmost respect and dignity. The mismanagement that has gone on at the cemetery is unconscionable, and this amendment goes one step closer to holding the Army accountable for fixing the problems there,” Wittman stated. “We live in the 21st Century with state of the art technology; yet Arlington Cemetery is still marking graves with note cards. I was pleased that my amendment was accepted in order to set a deadline for the Army to digitize the records.”

Shipbuilding Provisions

The bill provides critical funding for Navy Shipbuilding and Conversion in the Department of Defense. This authorization bill will provide sustained funding for two Virginia Class Submarines, Aircraft Carrier Refueling Complex Overhaul (RCOH), Ford Class Carrier CVN-78 construction, and advanced procurement of CVN 79 and Virginia Class Submarines.

“As a member of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee and the Co-Chair of the Shipbuilding Caucus and the Submarine Caucus, I am happy to see a serious commitment from this nation and its lawmakers to provide our Navy with a Fleet of at least 313 ships. We have the greatest Navy, and most robust military shipbuilding capability in the world, and we must make sure it stays that way throughout the 21st century,” Wittman commented.

Defense Access Road Provision

The Defense Access Road (DAR) Program allows DoD to pay a portion of highway improvements needed due to defense-generated impacts (such as a BRAC move). This provision reforms DAR to lower the threshold that must be met to use DAR funds to expand existing roads. It also clarifies that DAR projects can include road, transit, bicycle/pedestrian, or other modal improvements; ensures Congress is aware of unmet DAR transportation needs; and strengthens the transportation planning process during BRAC planning by improving consultation with local stakeholders and transportation planners.

“The Defense Access Road Program is vital to bases such as Marine Corps Base Quantico that are seeing an increase in workforce due to the last BRAC round. DoD must pay its fair share to help with the transportation infrastructure burdens it is causing for the local communities surrounding DoD bases. DoD is an important partner of the Commonwealth, and this provision will lead to better communication and consultation with localities and transportation planners,” Wittman explained.

Stopping a Carrier Move to Florida

Wittman also fought against an amendment proposed by the Florida Armed Services Committee Delegation that would have provided \$30 million in funding for port improvements in Mayport, Florida, in preparation to potentially move a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier from Norfolk, VA, to Mayport.

“In a time when the Department of Defense has announced efforts to cut spending and achieve greater efficiencies, and there is a \$3 billion funding shortfall for sustainment, repair, and modernization projects at the four naval shipyards, the decision to add a duplicative carrier homeport to the East Coast just does not make sense,” said Wittman.

More:

May 11, 2011 Video: [Congressman Wittman Weighs in Against Proposal to Move Carrier to Mayport](#)