

August 5, 2008: Weekly Washington Update

Last week was the final week prior to the August District Work Period. As many of you know, Congress has historically always recessed for the month of August.

Prior to the advent of air conditioning, this was because the heat and humidity in Washington during August were unbearable! However, in today's world of climate control, August has become a great opportunity for Members of Congress to spend an entire uninterrupted month working in their districts and meeting with constituents. I'm certainly looking forward to spending a lot of time all over the First District.

This week, I voted in favor of the FY09 funding bill for Veterans Affairs and Military Construction, which will directly support the many veterans and military installations in the First District. Overall, the bill contained \$40.8 billion for the Veterans Health Administration to provide medical care to veterans and \$30.9 billion for veterans' medical services. The legislation also included \$24.8 billion in funding for military construction and \$3.2 billion for military and family housing projects. Specifically for the First District, this bill provides \$150.29 million for construction projects at Quantico Marine Base and \$8.3 million for construction at Ft. Eustis.

On Thursday, I introduced Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act, H.R. 6771. This bill would modernize the management of the Bay recovery effort to make it more flexible, efficient and effective by requiring the implementation of cutting edge management techniques. As you may know, I've spent 16 years as a shellfish specialist monitoring water quality and environmental health issues in the Bay. Based on my experience, I think this legislation is a solid step in making sure we're seeing significant progress for the massive amounts of money that we're investing in restoring the Bay.

Unfortunately, one issue the House didn't act on this week was a comprehensive energy policy. I was quite disappointed by this, as I feel that energy costs are the number one issue affecting each of us in the First District. That's why I voted against adjournment and am now calling on the Speaker to convene Congress for a special session in August to deal with energy. Each of us has a busy schedule planned in our districts, but I remain convinced that members on both sides of the aisle would jump at the opportunity to debate and vote on a meaningful, comprehensive energy policy.

For the next several weeks, I have a packed schedule working throughout the First District. In addition to many other events, I'll be at several county fairs, the Kilmarnock Fireman's Festival, visiting Colonial Williamsburg and also touring the Yorktown Refinery. I would love to speak with you in person and hear your concerns and input. If I don't have the opportunity to see you at a public event, I would welcome you to stop by one of my local offices in Yorktown, Fredericksburg or Tappahannock. As always, you can contact my Washington office at (202) 225-4261 or at <http://wittman.house.gov/>.