

## August 19, 2008: Weekly Washington Update

The Chesapeake Bay is at the heart of Virginia's economy and its environmental well being. For centuries, the Bay has shaped the lives and livelihoods of Virginia residents and continues to define the character of our region. Yet, as important as the Bay is, our efforts to restore it have fallen far short of our aspirations.

Recently, I introduced legislation to modernize the Chesapeake Bay recovery effort. The Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act, H.R. 6771, would implement modern management techniques and result in a more productive and efficiently managed recovery effort. I offered this bill in August and plan to continue pushing for passage when Congress returns in September.

Cleaning up the Bay is a complex effort. Currently, it includes over one thousand localities, ten federal agencies, six states, the District of Columbia and countless non-governmental organizations. The level of federal, state, local and stakeholder participation is a testament to the shared commitment to restoration. However, we've seen billions of dollars spent over the years, without seeing corresponding progress.

While there have been some encouraging developments, there are many problematic issues that remain unresolved. Among those that directly impact the First District, blue crab populations are down 70% since 1990. Native oyster populations are currently at less than 1% of historical levels. Also, reductions in nutrient and sediment pollution are way behind schedule to meet Chesapeake 2000 agreement goals.

My Chesapeake Bay Recovery and Accountability Act will ensure that we're working more effectively in our efforts to improve the Chesapeake Bay. Put simply, we must use the performance based measures of crosscut budgeting and adaptive management to assure that dollars currently spent on Bay restoration activities are producing results. By implementing cross cut budgeting, which will identify the amount of money and where it is being spent on Bay restoration efforts, we can better understand manage the dollars spent on the Bay. Additionally by using adaptive management we will evaluate if the dollars being spent on Bay restoration efforts are producing results and if they are not, this money should be redirected to those efforts that are working. Using these tools we'll be able to better organize our efforts and allocate resources. This will translate into a more effective Bay restoration efforts and better returns on the dollars we invest.

Prior to coming to Congress, I spent eighteen years as a shellfish specialist monitoring water quality and environmental health issues in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. I understand firsthand the complexity of this recovery project and I've drawn heavily on my experience in drafting this bill.

While the techniques required by my bill are modern, they're not unproven. Both crosscut budgeting and adaptive management have been used successfully in complex restoration efforts in the Everglades, the Great Lakes and the California Bay Delta. By applying lessons learned in those programs, I think we will achieve substantial improvements in Chesapeake Bay restoration.

Restoring the Chesapeake Bay is important to Virginia, and has national and global implications as well. As a member of the House Natural Resources Committee, the health of the Chesapeake is one of my top priorities. I believe that the Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act will set us on track to achieve substantial improvements in Chesapeake Bay Restoration.