

# A Mighty Fish Story: Wittman's Walls Bring Great Outdoors Inside

*Link to [story](#) and [video](#)*

June 16, 2010

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Staffers who work for Rep. Rob Wittman (R-Va.) refer to his personal office as “the fishbowl,” though not for reasons you might expect.

Sure, Congressmen are observed from every angle by the media and the general public, but this level of exposure has no bearing on the office's nickname. Instead, the name was coined because more than a dozen fish caught by Wittman hang on blue walls, making visitors feel as if they are in an aquarium rather than a Congressional office.

“As you can imagine, I like my outdoor sports, I like my hunting and fishing,” he says. “What you see on the wall here are a variety of saltwater and freshwater fish.”

On a nearby end table sit several oyster shells — adding to the “under the sea” theme — while a stuffed duck is also on display. But the most eye-catching thing in the Longworth House Office Building suite is a yellowfin tuna the size of a person hanging above a leather sofa. Wittman ate the fish he caught, but he had a fiberglass replica made and mounted it on the wall.

“I'd been fishing for years trying to catch a yellowfin tuna over 300 pounds, so I finally got that off of my bucket list,” he says with a proud smile.

He caught the fish five years ago in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Bucierias, Mexico. Wittman had fished this spot many times over the years but had only been able to catch fish in the 200- to 250-pound range. He finally caught the 308-pound tuna after struggling for two hours and 45 minutes, during which he was standing up, strapped to the boat.

“It was a tug of war between myself and the tuna, and as you can see I won,” he says. “But it was a lot of fun. I enjoy getting out there.”

Getting the tuna on the wall may have been just as difficult as reeling it in. During the weekend of President Barack Obama's inauguration, the massive fish arrived in a 10-foot crate at the home of Wittman's legislative director, after being driven on the back of a truck from California. A few of Wittman's staffers packed it into the back of an SUV and drove it to the Capitol despite the throngs of people milling about the Hill trying to score tickets to the inauguration.

Wittman was so eager to hang the fish on the wall that rather than wait for Architect of the Capitol staff to come by, he enlisted his staffers to help him mount the fish. The Congressman climbed on a leather couch with a few tools and hung the fish on

his own.

"After all the great efforts by everyone to get the tuna into the office, we were really eager to get it up on the wall, and I decided to go ahead without a construction crew. So I hopped up on the couch with a level and a hammer, and went to work," Wittman says.

Staffers now joke that discussion of the giant tuna and the Congressman's love of fishing adds 10 minutes to any meeting held in the office.

Wittman began fishing as a toddler with his father. He grew up around a lot of streams and ponds in Westmoreland County, Va., and would fish after school as a kid.

"I remember going out with a cane pole and a bobber and a can of worms and going out and catching some bluegill at the pond, and it just grew from there," he recalls.

He caught his first fish off a pier in Virginia during a fishing trip with his father and a family friend.

"I remember my dad helping me put the worm on the hook and put the bobber out there," he says. "I thought that was the neatest thing in the world when the fish would come up there and eat the worm. ... The fish was hooked and so was I."

Nowadays, Wittman doesn't get to fish nearly as much as he'd like to. What used to be a daily ritual now occurs only two or three times a year.

"It's little snippets of time," he says. "You get an hour here, an hour there."

While Wittman may not get to spend a lot of time on the water, he does have a job that allows him to spend a lot of time thinking about fishing. From his seat on the Natural Resources Committee, Wittman is able to work on legislation regarding the streams and ponds that he holds near and dear. And anytime he misses having a rod in his hand, he can take a seat in the fishbowl and reminisce among some of his favorite catches.

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