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Wittman Applauds Passage of Telework Bill

Would Require the Federal Government to Increase Utilization of Telework

Washington, DC – Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1) applauded passage today of H.R. 1722, the Telework Improvements Act of 2010. H.R. 1722 would require each executive agency to establish a telework policy under which employees would be authorized to telework to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance or agency operations. The bill would permit employees to telework at least 20 percent of the hours worked in every two administrative workweeks.

“Telework is a key part of the solution to alleviating traffic congestion, and it’s also crucial to ensuring continuity of operations in the case of a national emergency or weather event like the 2010 winter storm on the East Coast. This bill will help ensure that Federal employees who are eligible to telework are able to do so and have access to facilities that can accommodate them,” said Wittman.

Under the bill, the head of each agency must designate a Telework Managing Officer and each agency must ensure that no distinction is made between employees who telework and those who do not for performance appraisals, training and other purposes. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) would issue regulations and guidance to agencies to implement telework programs, and OPM and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) would be required to evaluate and report on agency telework programs.

After taking into account the 30% of Federal workers found to have been teleworking during this winter’s week-long snow storm, the Office of Personnel Management downgraded its initial estimate that the government lost \$100 million worth of productivity each day it remained closed to a projected lost of \$71 million for each day during the closure.

Earlier this year, Wittman introduced H.R. 4348, the Telework Tax Incentive Act, which would provide eligible taxpayers with an annual tax credit for qualified teleworking expenses paid or incurred by the taxpayer that year, up to \$1,000. Employees working in a teleworking arrangement where the employee works at least 75 days per year would be eligible to receive the tax credit. Wittman also successfully included language in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 which directs the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Office of Personnel Management and the General Services Administration, to assess sites within the Washington Metropolitan Area in order to identify at least two sites for a possible pilot program to provide secure teleworking for Federal employees.

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“Despite the fact that there are numerous benefits to teleworking, such as reduced traffic congestion and energy consumption, cost savings, competitive hiring and retention, and emergency preparedness, many Federal agencies continue to underutilize telework. These bills are a step forward to getting vehicles off the roads in our region, enhancing productivity, reducing costs, and ensuring continuity of operations within the Federal government,” added Wittman.

The legislation passed by a vote of 290-131.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

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