



The Comstock CONNECTION

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CONGRESSWOMAN BARBARA COMSTOCK'S 10TH DISTRICT NEWSPAPER • DECEMBER 15, 2015

House Passes 5-Year Transportation Bill

One of our top priorities in Virginia's 10th District has been to improve our transportation system by reducing traffic congestion, providing more resources for improving our roads, and upgrading transit. To this end we passed a five-year bipartisan transportation bill, H.R. 22, the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act*, or the FAST Act. The President has signed the bill into law.

I serve on the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee, including its Subcommittees on Highways and Transit; Aviation; and Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management. The

bipartisan FAST Act we passed provides state and local governments much-needed stability in funding that allows for savings in transportation budgeting and long term planning.

The FAST Act will improve our roads, bridges, and infrastructure so that families and goods can move more freely, safely, and efficiently throughout our region and the country. The bill also streamlines the environmental review and permitting process so projects can start in a timely manner, eliminates or consolidates six separate offices in the Department of Transportation (DOT), increases transparency at DOT, promotes private investment within our surface transportation system, and will help facilitate eco-



Congresswoman Comstock with U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx after a briefing on Metro.

nommic growth by modernizing our systems and increasing innovation.

Because the House and Senate had each originally passed different ver-

sions of this legislation, a conference committee was formed to negotiate the differences. I served on that con-

See **TRANSPORTATION BILL** on page 7

National Security and Homeland Security Update

After September 11, 2001, we tragically learned that al Qaeda was at war with us, but we were not at war with them. With the recent murderous terrorist attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino, California, we have learned that ISIS and radical Islam are waging war — not only with France or the United States, but with the Western world.

Our first responsibility in Congress is to keep the American people safe during this time of ever-increasing threats. As former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said when he spoke to members of Congress during a recent visit to the U.S., we must have an active policy of engagement that is sophisticated and informed by our experience — not incapacitated by it.

We now must reinvigorate our national security and intelligence

capabilities that have been weakened over the last few years. That is why we passed an annual defense authorization bill that increased defense spending, put an end to harmful defense sequestration cuts, reformed our refugee process and reformed our visa waiver system to ensure the safety of the homeland. We must continue to address the

terrorist threat by providing cutting edge intelligence capabilities including increased cyber capabilities and addressing the growing social media strategies of the enemy, among our many challenges.

Putting an End to Sequestration

In late October, the House passed

See **SECURITY** on page 7

Combating Human Trafficking

Unfortunately over the past few years we have come to learn that Northern Virginia is a target and market for human traffickers. This growing criminal enterprise knows no boundaries — it is happening all around the world and all around the country. Nearly 300 victims of human trafficking have been

identified in Northern Virginia from October 2013 through January 2015.

Human Trafficking was one of the first issues we took up in the 114th Congress. I cosponsored nine bipartisan human trafficking bills and became a member of the Congressional Human Trafficking Caucus. I was pleased

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Barbara Comstock
M.C.
PRSRT STD CR—RTSORT

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Official Business

Working for Our Veterans

The first legislation I cosponsored in Congress and the first bill we voted on this year was a bill to help our veterans, the *Hire More Heroes Act*. The 114th Congress has made it a priority to help our nation's veterans. Here are just some of the bills I have supported that make good on our promises to our veterans:

Bills Signed Into Law

- **The Hire More Heroes Act** helps both veterans and small businesses by exempting veterans from being counted as part of the *Affordable Care Act* "employer mandate" rule, which requires businesses with more than 50 full-time employees to provide healthcare for their employees. It makes it easier for veterans to find good-paying jobs by offering small businesses much-needed relief from Obamacare mandates. It passed on the first full day of the 114th Congress, and was signed into law over the summer as part of another bill, the bipartisan *Surface Transportation and Veterans Health Care Choice Improvement Act*.

- **The Border Jobs for Veterans Act** is also a jobs bill for veterans. It directs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to consider the expedited hiring of qualified candidates for positions in Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Our returning servicemembers already have a majority of the training necessary for armed patrols, so it only makes sense that they be given priority and expedited consideration for employment as a CBP officer. This bill has also been signed into law.

- **The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act** is named for Marine Corps sniper Clay Hunt who, like all too many of our veterans, had a hard time transitioning back to civilian life after deployments in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In crisis, and without the treatment he needed

and deserved, Clay took his own life. In 2012, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reported that, on average, veterans were committing 22 suicides per day. The *Clay Hunt SAV Act* combats this epidemic by improving and increasing access to mental health care at the VA to meet demand, establishes a pilot program to assist veterans transitioning from active duty to veteran status, and requires a yearly evaluation of all VA mental health care and suicide prevention practices and programs to find out what is and what is not working and make recommendations to improve care. This bill has also been signed into law.

Other Veterans Bills I Have Cosponsored

- **The Servicemember Assistance for Lawful Understanding, Treatment, and Education Act (SALUTE Act)** helps our returning veterans who are struggling with substance abuse, PTSD, and other issues that stem from the difficulties of service in a forward area. Oftentimes, our veterans with various issues unfortunately end up in the court system. This bill bolsters veteran's treatment courts, as well as mental health courts and drug courts, each of which has proven to be effective in dealing with these specific issue areas.

- **The Retired Pay Restoration Act** addresses the issue known as "concurrent receipt" by allowing the veterans to receive both military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation if related to any service-connected disability, even those disabilities rated less than 50 percent.

- **The Military Spouse Job Continuity Act** provides relief to the spouses of those who serve in our military by providing them with tax relief for state relicensing costs associated with certain professions when they are required to move to a new location.



Congresswoman Comstock with Army Master Sergeant Norman Duncan, a WWII veteran, after discussing veterans issues at the Loudoun County Salute to Our Veterans.

- **The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act** ensures that service members who fought or worked offshore during the Vietnam War are eligible to receive proper treatment for diseases related to exposure to certain herbicide agents such as Agent Orange.

- **The Mental Health and Safe Communities Act** which, among other things, ensures that veterans' Second Amendment rights are not infringed simply because they have a fiduciary who handles their finances.

Meeting with Our Veterans Across the District

While traveling across the 10th District for veterans events, we visited Millbrook High School in Frederick County for an entirely student-run program honoring our veterans known as "Calling All Everyday Superheroes." The students held a breakfast and a program to honor and thank our veterans and educate our students and community about their service.

I also was honored to join our veterans in Berryville to speak at their commemoration and witness the presentation of the inaugural "Veteran of the Year Award" to Judge Norman Dev. Morrison. Judge Morrison is a retired Army National Guard captain who bravely served his country and has since been an active and engaged member of our community who is always serving his neighbors in Berryville.

Our veterans provide a great resource of talent and knowledge for us to enrich our communities. Keeping our promises to our nation's veterans is one of my top priorities in Congress. Doing so not only ensures the long-term viability of an all-volunteer force, it honors the dedication and sacrifice made by our brave men and women in uniform.

President Abraham Lincoln said of our veterans that we must "care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan." Constituents throughout the 10th District live up to this challenge every day and we are honored to work with them.

10th Congressional District Young Women Leadership Program

This year, I started the 10th Congressional District Young Women Leadership Program. The program is designed to offer young women the opportunity to meet with and hear from women leaders in a variety of careers and professions.

The inspiration for the program came from Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In* which provides commonsense solutions to empower women to seek leadership roles and achieve their full potential. Our program has that same mission. Each year we kick off the Young Women Leadership Program by showing a video of Ms. Sandberg's TED Talk in which she discusses her experience in advancing to be one of the top women in business today and her advice to women in the workplace.

This year, over 250 middle and high school-aged young women from all over the district participated in the program. The sessions included such leaders as Representatives Elise Stefanik —



Congresswoman Comstock with participants in the 10th Congressional District Young Women Leadership Program.

the youngest female member of Congress; Debbie Dingell, a freshman member of Congress who has worked in government affairs in the auto industry for years; Tracy Fitzsimmons, the President of Shenandoah University; Amy Hess, Executive Assistant Director at the FBI; Cathy Mangum, NASA Langley HQ CIO; and many more.

The young women heard from senior women in a variety of professions in the fields of technology, aerospace and aviation, medicine, business, government, higher education, law enforcement, sports and more. The program also included a special session on the growing problem of human trafficking in our region and women

leaders who are working in our community on combating and preventing this growing crime. The program will continue in the summer of 2016 and you can watch for the applications in the coming months online at www.Comstock.House.gov.

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Making the Pilgrimage to Selma to Honor the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Marches

In March, I participated with more than 100 other members of Congress in the pilgrimage to Selma and Montgomery, Ala., led by my colleague, Rep. John Lewis, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Marches from Selma to Montgomery. Rep. John Lewis, who led the many brave men and women who marched 50 years ago, shared with us how they risked their lives to secure their God given rights for all men and women to be treated equally under the law.

The pilgrimage was a moving experience for us all as we walked with Rep. Lewis across the Edmund Pettus Bridge where he had suffered beatings with his fel-



Congresswoman Comstock during the Congressional Pilgrimage to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Selma Civil Rights Marches.

low marchers. We attended services in the Brown AME church and other churches where Rev. King had preached and that served as safe havens for these civil rights heroes 50 years ago. These churches were also the target of violence and bombings that took young, innocent lives. We sang the beautiful spirituals side by side with those who had marched 50 years ago. Thousands came together over the weekend to honor all of the heroes.

Prior to the pilgrimage, Congress also passed bipartisan legislation (H.R. 431) awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the foot soldiers who participated in the Selma to Montgomery marches in March of 1965.

Working to Eradicate Heroin

Not a week goes by without us hearing more about the threat of heroin and other opioid-based controlled substances. They are ruining lives and becoming an increasing threat in Northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. That is why I have teamed up with our local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to create two task forces — the regional Heroin Operations Team (HOT) with the cooperation of Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman and the Shenandoah Valley Opioid Taskforce with the cooperation of Winchester Chief of Police Kevin Sanzenbacher.

Shenandoah Valley/Winchester Task Force Efforts

On May 4, I participated in a roundtable with law enforcement stakeholders in Winchester where we discussed the heroin epidemic in the Shenandoah Valley. After this roundtable, and with the recommendation of our local authorities, we wrote to the Office of National Drug Control Policy in support of the Northwest Regional Drug and Gang Task Force's request that Frederick and Warren counties be designated as a high-intensity

drug trafficking area (HIDTA). A HIDTA designation would provide additional resources to assist federal, state, and local agencies in coordinating activities that address the rise of drug trafficking. Our first responders and law enforcement are making great strides already, but this designation will give them enhanced capabilities to help battle this epidemic. Currently, all of Northern Virginia is designated as a HIDTA region; however this increasingly busy narcotics corridor in the Shenandoah Valley necessitates this designation as well.

Loudoun County Task Force Efforts

On August 27, I participated in a similar forum in Leesburg so that constituents could hear an update from Sheriff Chapman, representatives from the Drug Enforcement Agency, Loudoun County Fire and Rescue, Loudoun County Mental Health, Loudoun County Public Schools, and the Commonwealth's Attorney Jim Plowman. The standing-room-only crowd demonstrated the willingness of our community to come together to address this growing problem. During the two-hour forum, we had an engaging conversation with a cross section of experts

in law enforcement, social services, our schools and our churches — all who have seen how heroin has harmed their friends, family, and our community. The sheriff's office gave a comprehensive breakdown on how they are combating heroin in Loudoun County and how they are bringing together stakeholders. Sheriff Chapman stressed that this is a community-wide problem that needs a community-wide response.

I have also worked on the legislative front to address the growing heroin epidemic. I have cosponsored a variety of bills that address different aspects of the heroin and addiction threats, including:

H.R. 953, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (Cosponsor)

This bill creates a Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force to develop and disseminate recommendations to address pain management and faults in the prescribing of opioids. It was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

H.R. 1821, the Opioid Overdose Reduction Act (Cosponsor)

This legislation will help save lives and get opioid-reversing drugs into the hands of first responders and good Samaritans so they can stop the deadly effects of heroin in the event of an overdose. This bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

H.R. 2805, the Heroin and Prescription Opioid Abuse Prevention, Education and Enforcement Act (Cosponsor)

This bill will establish best practices for pain management and for prescribing pain medication. It will also reauthorize important prescription drug monitoring programs that can track individual prescription orders to help crack down on dealers and increase access to life-saving medication for heroin victims. This bill was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, as well as the Judiciary Committee.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS FOR THOSE WHO NEED HELP FIGHTING ADDICTION:

FAIRFAX

Fairfax Detoxification Center
703-502-7000

LOUDOUN

Loudoun Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Developmental Services
703-771-5100

PRINCE WILLIAM

Prince William Community Emergency Services
703-792-7800

SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Frederick County Sheriff
540-662-6168
Clarke County Sheriff
540-955-1234
Winchester Police Department
540-662-4131

H.R. 1462, the Protecting Our Infants Act; and H.R. 3865, the CRADLE Act

(Cosponsor of both)

We must not forget how heroin affects the most vulnerable in our community. These bills will help combat the rise of prenatal opioid abuse and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), will help identify best practices for the diagnosis and treatment of NAS, and will coordinate research efforts. Babies who suffer from NAS are hospitalized in special facilities like those at the Winchester Medical Center, where we visited earlier this year. The nurses in this neonatal unit are setting the standard of care for these fragile infants in their one-of-a-kind Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The CRADLE Act was referred to the Energy and Commerce Committee, and the Protecting Our Infants Act passed the House with my support on September 8, and it now awaits further action in the Senate.

As we continue to work with local, state, and federal authorities to combat heroin and opioid abuse, we will keep you updated about the progress being made.

ALL PARTICIPATING AGENCIES STRESSED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO BATTLE HEROIN:

- Prevention and educational efforts.
- Making naloxone available to law enforcement agencies and other first responders to help in the reversal of overdoses to save lives.
- Conducting research to promptly identify and treat incarcerated individuals suffering from addiction disorders by collaborating with the criminal justice stakeholders and non-profits, and by crafting and executing evidence-based treatment plans.
- Expanding disposal sites for unwanted or unused prescription medications to keep them out of the hands of our children and adolescents.
- Raising awareness of the current opioid treatment and intervention programs available to the community.
- Strengthening prescription drug monitoring programs to help neighboring states monitor and track prescription drugs so they are not transported to our area.

21st Century Cures Act and Health Care Innovation

We all want to read newspaper headlines proclaiming that deadly or chronic diseases — such as cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, or one of many others — have been cured. Modern medicine, technology, and innovation make new cures, drugs, and disease management tools possible in our lifetime.

One of the most important things we in Congress can do is to shorten the timetable to make these new drugs, discoveries, treatments, and cures available. Congress must foster a healthcare infrastructure and environment that reforms and modernizes the FDA, expedites the process for cures and treatments to get to market, and ultimately saves lives. America must continue to be on the cutting edge in pushing new frontiers of medicine and making sure that whatever the federal government does advances and complements exciting private sector innovations.

The *21st Century Cures Act* that we passed on July 10 presents a national vision and a major opportunity to advance better detection and management of diseases and disorders. I was a cosponsor of this bipartisan legislation that sailed through the House with overwhelming support.

Investment in medical research in *21st Century Cures* provides the ability to get new lifesaving treatments more expeditiously to the patients who need them and unleash medical innovation across the country. A treatment that delays the onset of Alzheimer's by five years alone could decrease the total costs of the disease by 33 percent, or \$367 billion, by 2050. And this is just one among many ailments — including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and arthritis — that plague millions of Americans both physically and often financially.

Currently, it takes nine or more years for a new cancer therapy to reach the market, which is one reason why this bill establishes the Council for 21st Century Cures to help accelerate the process. This council will be responsible for fostering collaboration, increasing

information sharing, and encouraging coordination among the different agencies and groups charged with ensuring patients receive the best treatments.

This legislation now awaits further action in the Senate. If signed into law, over the next five years the *21st Century Cures Act* will provide \$10 billion to the National Institute of Health (NIH) and \$550 million to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These additional investments will allow for better research and development of cures while concurrently providing more grants and allowing young scientists to grow in their careers. It will also allow for a better approval process of new drug and medical devices while improving communication among patients, scientists, researchers, and caregivers. I will continue to support policies that improve and streamline our health system to make it the best in the world.

Supporting Our Advanced Health Facilities

As residents of the 10th District, we live in a region where we are surrounded by world-renowned, innovative medical care. This year, we visited a number of medical facilities



Congresswoman Comstock with health care professionals in Leesburg following a tour of Novant Health and a discussion of the issues facing the health care field today.

around the 10th District, including the Winchester Medical Center, INOVA Ashburn HealthPlex, and StoneSprings Hospital Center. At each of these medical centers we met with doctors, nurses, and stake-

holders to discuss the 21st Century Cures Act and other health care legislation that will provide critical health care funding for these medical centers and many others.

Do You Need Help with a Federal Agency?

How can we help with a federal agency?

We are happy to help you make inquiries to various federal agencies, should you authorize us to do so. While we cannot guarantee an outcome, we will do our best to ensure that your inquiry receives the utmost attention. Each federal agency does have the final say regarding any issue, but we will fight on your behalf and make our best effort for you.

Who can we help?

We can help any resident in Virginia's 10th Congressional District.

What types of inquiries can we make on your behalf?

We can help with federal agencies that operate under the federal government. Many of the most common areas where people need assistance are:

- Veterans issues
- Help with immigration

- Medicare and Medicaid
- Social Security
- Applying for grants
- Tax-related issues
- Passports

What do we need?

We require written, signed authorization to proceed with any inquiries.

Contact our district offices

Please contact our district offices if you need any assistance with federal agencies.

Loudoun County
21430 Cedar Drive
Suite 218
Sterling, VA 20164
703-404-6903

Shenandoah Valley
117 E. Piccadilly Street
Suite 100 D
Winchester, VA 22601
540-773-3600

Pope Francis' Historic Visit to Washington

In September, Pope Francis visited Washington, and for the first time in history, a Pope addressed the United States Congress. As a Catholic it was incredibly moving to attend His Holiness' address and to have my family present when the Pope spoke to the crowd outside the Capitol that had been gathering since early morning.

Pope Francis particularly focused on children with a blessing saying,

"I thank the most important people who are here: the children. I want to ask God to bless you. Lord, our father of all, bless these people. Bless each

and every one of them. Bless their families. Give them what they need the most."

It was moving to know that my granddaughter, Hailey, as well as so many children from our district were present for that Papal blessing of the children. My office was able to provide hundreds of constituents with tickets to this special event and join the many that came from all around the country to give the Holy Father a warm welcome. The day before the Pope's address, I attended the White House Welcoming Ceremony with my goddaughter. We joined 15,000 guests on the White House lawn to welcome the Holy Father to the United States.



His Holiness Pope Francis addressing the crowd following his historic address to Congress.

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to be able to continue my work on this issue that we also addressed in the state legislature.

Perhaps the most comprehensive anti-human trafficking legislation that passed this year was S. 178, the *Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act*, which provides restitution to victims of these crimes and increases the punishment for those who profit from them. It also recognizes child pornography as a form of human trafficking and subjects perpetrators to stricter punishment. This important and bipartisan legislation passed through the House with my support and was signed into law on May 29 with House provisions that I cosponsored.

These bills and a number of others related to human trafficking passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives.

Human Trafficking Legislation Supported by Rep. Comstock

H.R. 350 – Human Trafficking Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Act, which requires comprehensive studies to determine best practices in combating human trafficking, and authorizes grants to provide housing assistance to trafficking victims. Status: Cosponsored, passed the House and signed into law as part of S.178.

H.R. 285 – Stop Advertising of Exploitation (SAVE) Act, which institutes harsh penalties for those who participate in or facilitate human trafficking, excluding victims. Status: Cosponsored, passed the House and signed into law as part of S.178.

H.R. 357 – Human Trafficking Prevention Act, which requires federal employees to undergo training to identify instances of human trafficking. Status: Cosponsored, passed House.

H.R. 246 – To improve the response to victims of child sex trafficking, which makes clear child prostitution is a form of “child sex trafficking” and thus, should still be reported to the tip-line administered by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Status: Cosponsored, passed House.

H.R. 469 – Strengthening Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, which conditions states' eligibility for grants mean to address child abuse and neglect by requiring states to develop plans that help state workers identify victims of trafficking. It also requires a number of reporting requirements, including statistics on children identified as sex trafficking victims. Status: Cosponsored, passed House.

H.R. 515 – International Megan's Law to Prevent Demand for Child Sex Trafficking, which aids DHS to work to identify international travel plans of registered child-sex offenders. It also urges the president to negotiate agreements with foreign nations for the purposes of information-sharing on the whereabouts of child-sex offenders, and encourages foreign governments to notify the U.S. when a known child-sex offender is seeking entry to the U.S. Status: Cosponsored, passed House.

H.R. 460 – Human Trafficking Detection Act, which requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to implement a human trafficking awareness program to train and periodically retrain relevant DHS personnel. The training must be given to personnel within TSA, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and other DHS personnel. Status: Cosponsored, passed House.

H.R. 514 – Human Trafficking Prioritization Act, which prioritizes the fight against human trafficking within the Department of State and streamlines State's efforts on this issue. Status: Cosponsored, passed House.

H.R. 400 – Trafficking Prevention in Foreign Affairs Contracting Act, which requires the Secretary

of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to submit reports on definitions of placement and recruitment fees for purposes of enabling compliance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Status: Cosponsored, reported favorably by House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but has not yet been considered by the full House.

One of the most important ways to address human trafficking is public education on the issue. To that end we have held and participated in a number of forums. We have held forums in churches and libraries throughout Virginia's 10th District. From the Life Church in Manassas to the Great Falls Library we have teamed up with a number of human trafficking nonprofits such as Just Ask VA, Polaris, as well as local law enforcement to shed light on human trafficking and to demonstrate how to protect our young and innocent. Our community is now fully engaged on this important issue, and the participation has been inspiring. An effective way to combat human trafficking is to acknowledge the problem and raise awareness of it, and these forums have succeeded in bringing our community together to do just that.

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ference committee and was able to negotiate a number of my provisions into the FAST Act. These provisions were primarily designed to reduce traffic congestion, get Metro's house in order, and keep control of certain highway programs at the state level. Here are more specifics about these provisions:

Traffic Congestion

A number of the provisions authorize the Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Research and Technology to develop strategies to employ cutting-edge tools and high technology to reduce traffic congestion. It must be both a regional and a national goal to meld innovation and technology so that we may bring our transportation systems into the 21st Century.

Metro Improvements

Other provisions focus on Metro and its lack of efficiency, safety, and accountability. One provision provides DOT the ability to assume

oversight and responsibility of safety management in the event that Metro fails to keep its customers safe. Another transferred authority to appoint the Federal Director of WMATA from the General Services Administration (GSA) to the Secretary of Transportation, who is much more likely to appoint a qualified representative to serve on a multi-state transit agency. These provisions were a joint effort between my office and the offices of Del. Holmes Norton of D.C. and Rep. Edwards of Maryland. With new management at the helm, Metro needs a top-to-bottom cultural change and refocused mission to ensure reliable and safe service to its customers.

State Control of Interstate Access

Under current law, Virginia and other states have authority to administer their own rules for managing certain aspects of traffic congestion on major thoroughfares. In Northern Virginia, one example of this flexibility comes in the form of

peak hour access to I-66. The general rule is that both I-66 lanes inside the beltway are HOV-2 access only (eastbound in the morning, westbound in the afternoon). But there is an exception for certain hybrid vehicles — if they have a certain tag or plate, they are allowed to access I-66 as a single-occupancy vehicle. The authority for Virginia and all states was set to expire on September 30, 2017. I was able to get that authority to be maintained for an additional two years. States are best equipped to know how to manage their own traffic congestion, and this provision extends certain flexibilities.

The FAST Act was signed into law on December 4, and I look forward to the benefits this legislation will bring to America's transportation and infrastructure systems.

Aviation and Dulles International Airport

Dulles Airport is a key part of our economy in the 10th District. In order to help revitalize Dulles,

which has been struggling in recent years with the economic downturn, I announced the formation of a working group this spring at the Dulles Matters! Conference. The working group is chaired by former Virginia Congressman Tom Davis and other state and local officials are assisting with this effort to identify ways to improve the economic vitality of Dulles Airport. Members of our community and my Virginia delegation colleagues recognize the importance of Dulles, which is one of two federally owned and operated civilian airports in the nation — the other being Reagan National Airport. Because of this unique status, we are dedicated to ensuring that it remains a strong economic engine for our region. From my position on the Subcommittee on Aviation, I will continue to fight for a healthy and thriving Dulles Airport as the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee takes up the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization next year.

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H.R. 1314, the *Bipartisan Budget Act* with my support. It was signed into law on November 2. This bipartisan budget will bring certainty to our military and federal employees without raising taxes or adding to the annual deficit. The defense sequestration cuts have indiscriminately hurt our national defense and military readiness at a perilous time. The *Bipartisan Budget Act* increases resources by \$40 billion over two years. These additional resources are desperately needed by our men and women in uniform so they are able to continue their mission.

Protecting the Homeland in the Fight Against Terrorism

The National Defense Authorization Act

In November, Congress passed the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016*, or NDAA, and the president signed it into law on November 25. The NDAA is the annual defense bill which sets our national security policy objectives; authorizes spending on defense systems, troop pay, and benefits; and

places certain limits on the president to prevent him from executing political objectives that are contrary to the will of Congress and would endanger national security. For example, the NDAA does not allow Guantanamo detainees to be transferred to the United States.

Among the many provisions in this year's NDAA, the law requires the president to develop a clear strategy to deal with growing terrorist threats, including ISIS. In my view, the President's speech responding to the two recent deadly terrorist assaults in Paris and in San Bernardino did not indicate that he appreciates the magnitude of the threat we are facing.

The American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act (SAFE Act)

The House of Representatives has made it clear that we will take action to address these recent attacks and the threats we face. In the wake of the November 13 terrorist attacks in Paris, the House took swift action and voted with a veto-proof bipartisan majority on H.R. 4038, the *American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act*, or the SAFE Act. The bill reforms our refugee processing

system that terrorists have indicated they would try to exploit through the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. In October, FBI Director James Comey said to Congress, "If we don't know much about somebody, there won't be anything in our data," and added "I can't sit here and offer anybody an absolute assurance that there's no risk associated with [taking in Syrian refugees]." This bill will pause the refugee program for both Syrian and Iraqi refugees until the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the FBI, and the Director of National Intelligence unanimously certify that each individual applicant does not pose a threat to national security or the safety of the American people. The Senate now has the opportunity to take up this legislation.

The Visa Waiver Program Improvement Act

On December 8, the House passed H.R. 158, the *Visa Waiver Program Improvement Act*, which would deny visa waiver status to citizens in any of our 38 partner countries who have traveled to terrorist associated countries such as Syria and Iraq. Thousands of Europeans

have traveled to fight with radical Islamic terrorist groups like ISIS and then traveled back to their home countries. This legislation also enables the Secretary of Homeland Security to halt visa waiver status of a partner country that fails to share counterterrorism information with the United States. Further, the bill provides for more international security mechanisms with which our partner countries must comply, including checks against INTERPOL databases, mandatory reporting and cataloguing of lost or stolen passports, and upgraded standards for passports to prevent counterfeiting.

We are a welcoming nation, but we are a nation of laws. The safety and security of the American people must always be our first priority. The terrorism threat is at our doorstep. In the 10th District of Virginia we already had a 17-year-old criminally charged for recruiting for ISIS online. Defeating ISIS is a necessity. Understanding the scope of the larger threat of terrorism and Islamic extremism and how it must be uprooted will be the challenge of our time.

Start Up Virginia!

Getting Our Economy, Small Businesses Thriving Once Again in the District

Learning from Businesses Throughout the 10th District

Getting our economy on the mend and growing is always a top priority. Putting America back to work is the best economic, social, and family policy that we can implement. That is why we are always visiting our local businesses when we are not in session in Congress. Talking to our business leaders throughout the 10th District is vital to finding solutions to turn our economy around.

We have a broad and diverse business community from which to learn how we can stay on the cutting edge of a 21st Century economy. We visited our defense companies and government contractors such as Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Orbital ATK, SAIC, Lockheed Martin, EMC, E3 and so many more to learn about what they are developing to protect our homeland and our men and women in uniform. We also learned from our technology leaders such as AOL, Equinix, Solebrity, and the many data centers, tech firms, and startups located in the 10th District and the rest of "Silicon Valley East."

During the course of the year, we have visited with and given congress-



Congresswoman Comstock with David Gum, the owner of White House Foods, a family-owned business in Winchester, following a tour and discussion of regulations affecting local businesses.

sional updates to the Prince William Chamber, the Fairfax County Chamber, the Loudoun Chamber, and the Top of Virginia Chamber of Commerce as well as the Dulles Area Association of Realtors and many other business associations such as our Kiwanis Clubs, Rotary Clubs and other service organizations that our business leaders are involved in. These roundtables and visits are always engaging and we learn firsthand what is on people's minds and how we can best solve their problems and serve them in Congress.

Unleashing Small Businesses to Lead the Way

Small businesses are also at the heart of a healthy economy and we need to make sure they can grow right here in the 10th District. Having been a small businesswoman myself, I know what it's like to sign the front of the paycheck as well as the back. That is why I was pleased to vote for H.R. 636, *America's Small Business Tax Relief Act*, which passed the House with a strong bipartisan vote. This legislation will help give small businesses more certainty when it comes to the tax code and allow for easier access to capital to be

reinvested and grow local businesses. I am also a cosponsor of H.R. 3328, the *Small Business Regulatory Sunset Act*, which would establish a set of criteria for review and eliminate burdensome regulations on small businesses at regularly scheduled intervals. I have also worked with many of our small businesses and franchises on legislation to stop what I consider to be the gross overreaches by the current National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). In my opinion, the NLRB has overstepped its authority with its ambush election ruling. I support legislation to reverse this misguided action. I am proud to represent a right-to-work state where workers have the freedom to choose whether to join a union or not. Virginia is a state where businesses and their employees work together to solve their problems and grow economic opportunity for all.

Our economic system of businesses large and small serves as a model for the country. I will continue to make it a priority to fight for a better regulatory environment that promotes job creation and small business growth across the 10th District and always stay in touch with and learn from our business leaders and our vibrant workforce.

Talented Young Artists

Each spring, members of Congress sponsor the Artistic Discovery Competition, a national arts competition for high school students. The competition encourages students from across the nation and from Virginia's 10th Congressional District to submit their original art work. The goal is to highlight the importance of an individual's artistic discovery and the cultivation of their talent in our schools. Since the competition's founding in 1982, over 650,000 students have participated. The 10th District of Virginia was fortunate to receive over 180 submissions in 2015.

This past May, we announced the winners of the Congressional Art

Competition for the 10th District of Virginia. Alena Titova, now a senior at Dominion High School, won Best in Show and attended our ceremony at the George Washington University Virginia Science and Technology Campus for the participants. In addition to Alena's award, twenty-six other students received recognition in categories ranging from mixed media to photography. In November, many of these students came to Capitol Hill with their families to view their artwork on display in our office. We enjoyed hosting the students and families and celebrating their artistic accomplishments.

The winners of each district throughout the country get the special opportunity to display their



Congresswoman Comstock with Alena Titova, the winner of Best Of Show in the 2015 Congressional Art Competition for the 10th Congressional District.

work in the U.S. Capitol for a full year. Additionally, the winners are recognized by their district at an annual award ceremony in

Washington, DC. Stay tuned for more information on next year's competition at Comstock.House.Gov.