

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Bobby Scott (VA-3) attended the groundbreaking of the new Simonsdale Elementary School in Portsmouth. Simonsdale Elementary has been serving the Simonsdale community since it first opened in 1946, and today it educates approximately 315 students from pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade.

"I believe the best way we as a nation can invest in our communities and in our future is by investing in the education of our children," said Rep. Scott. "By giving our students a strong foundation, a quality education, and making sure they are on track to either complete college or to get a good job, we help to ensure that they will have a productive future. Today's groundbreaking for the new Simonsdale Elementary School is a symbol of that kind of investment."

Funding for the construction of the new school comes from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which funds shovel-ready projects to help boost the economy. Simonsdale Elementary received a no-interest \$18 million bond.

"The funding made available for this project is a reflection of our federal-level commitment to our economic recovery," concluded Rep. Scott. "It will help create jobs, and it will improve the learning environment for our school children."

Portsmouth Schools is one of 30 school divisions in Virginia recognized by the Virginia School Boards Association as a certified green school division, meaning that its schools engage in practices to improve energy efficiency and protect the environment. The new Simonsdale Elementary will be its first entirely energy-efficient "green school" and has been designed to satisfy the requirements of Silver LEED Certification, the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability in the U.S. The "green school" plans include a geothermal heating and cooling system, a green roof to reduce storm-water runoff and help protect the Chesapeake Bay, and a steel frame to better insulate the building.

The new two-story school building, which will have a view of the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River, will include a gymnasium and rooms to accommodate art, music and science education. It will serve the old Simonsdale population as well as children from Olive Branch Elementary, a neighboring school. The new Simonsdale Elementary is expected to open to students in 2011.

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