
News From Congressman Ben Cline



CONGRESSMAN
BEN CLINE



Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

It was a great week to be home in Virginia's beautiful Sixth District, where I had the opportunity to travel across our region meeting with businesses and constituents alike. As we celebrated National Agriculture Week, I wanted to take a moment to update residents on the important role the Ag industry plays in our District. Further, I enjoyed spending time in Roanoke where I both paid tribute to our Vietnam Veterans and learned about the important impact Delta Dental is making in our community. Additionally, I was pleased to join hundreds of residents in New Market this week to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of Shenandoah County. Rest assured that I am taking the concerns I heard from constituents over the past few days back to Washington as the House prepares for several weeks in Session.

National Agriculture Week:

Agriculture is the Commonwealth's largest private industry and makes up 9.5 percent of the state's total gross domestic product, much of that being cultivated right in the Shenandoah Valley. Virginia's Sixth District is home to more than 8,000 farms covering over 1.2 million acres. Augusta and Rockingham Counties play a major role in agriculture across the Commonwealth being two of the top five agricultural counties in Virginia with Augusta leading the way at the top of the list. The commodities and products coming out of the District make up 37 percent of all agriculture sales here in Virginia with our poultry industry being the biggest economic driver. Our farmers and their families are deeply rooted in the heart of the Sixth District where 97 percent of the farms are family-owned and operated that go back for many generations. Throughout the Shenandoah Valley, we have more than 13,000 producers—35 percent of them being women—that work the ground more efficiently than ever before feeding six times as many people as they did in the 1960s. The Commonwealth's agriculture industry as a whole creates 334,000 jobs and has an economic impact of \$70 billion annually. From the farm gate to

the dinner plate, our producers' impacts go beyond the Sixth District, and I am grateful to live in a place that has so many individuals and families working to feed, fuel, and clothe the world. As we celebrate National Agriculture week, I remain committed to supporting our country's farmers, ranchers, and producers.

To that end, I recently took action to support the agriculture industry by joining my colleagues in writing to the Chair of the U.S. International Trade Commission regarding the price of fertilizer, which is one of the biggest concerns I've been hearing about lately from farmers. In fact, many are seeing fertilizer prices four to five times higher than this time last year - and this is on top of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasting that farm production expenses will increase by 6.6% from 2021 in 2022. That is why I urged the International Trade Commission to reconsider the duties placed on phosphate fertilizer products imported from Morocco and suspend the current process to impose new duties on urea ammonium nitrate fertilizer from Trinidad and Tobago. Eliminating these duties on fertilizer imports provides the most immediate opportunity for a near-term, partial remedy to the high costs of fertilizer facing U.S. farmers before the end of the 2022 planting season. Currently, in a time of tight global supply and demand for corn, soybeans, wheat, and other commodities, planting decisions are increasingly being made not on market fundamentals but rather on the cost of production driven by the price and supply of fertilizer. Congress must continue to look for ways to support farmers and producers during these difficult economic times. The full letter can be found [here](#).



Honoring Vietnam Veterans:

This Saturday, I was pleased to join Chapter 81 of the Vietnam Veterans of America at Freedom Plaza in Roanoke to celebrate National Vietnam Veterans Day, which is observed on March 29 annually. Throughout the war, approximately 2.7 million American men and women served in Vietnam, including 230,000 from Virginia. We came together to pay tribute to those who served there, to those who were wounded, to those still missing in action, and to the more than 58,000 brave souls who gave their last full measure defending the values that this country holds dear. I appreciated the opportunity to thank the Veterans in attendance for their service, as well as highlight how Congress is continuing to work to address issues related to their time

-serving overseas. For example, in 2019, I was pleased to cosponsor and see signed into law the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act*. This bill now ensures Veterans who served in specified offshore areas near Vietnam are given the same presumption of Agent Orange exposure as those who served on the ground, thus allowing them to receive the medical care and disability compensation they deserve. Moving forward, I will continue to seek out similar bipartisan bills that work to create a VA that provides quality health care in a timely manner and one that meets the increasing needs of Veterans from the Vietnam era.



Celebrating Shenandoah County:

Over the weekend it was a pleasure to join the folks from across the Commonwealth in New Market to celebrate Shenandoah County's 250th Anniversary. Originally known as Dunmore, the County was established by the Virginia General Assembly on March 24, 1772. However, not long after, the County was renamed Shenandoah in 1778 to reflect the occupants' dedication to the Patriot cause during the American Revolution. Since its establishment, Shenandoah County has had a strong history of local businesses, farms, healthcare, tourism, manufacturing, and award-winning education. Coupled together, these qualities make the County a remarkable place to call home. At the event, I was pleased to present local officials with a copy of the Congressional Record highlighting their anniversary and marking the many successes the County has had over the past 250 years.



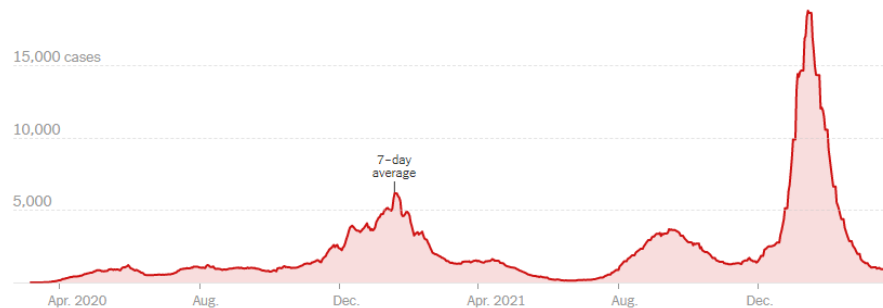
Delta Dental:

Founded in 1954, Delta Dental is the United States' largest provider of dental benefits, covering more than 83 million Americans. Here in the Commonwealth, the company is headquartered in Roanoke, but has additional offices in Richmond, Hampton Roads, and in Northern Virginia. Not only does the company provide coverage for 2 million Virginians, but is also committed to giving back to our community. Just last year, Delta Dental of Virginia awarded \$500,000 in grants to provide oral health services to 3,568 children and adults. During my visit to the headquarters this week, I was pleased to learn that the company was involved in the creation of the Local Impact for Tomorrow (LIFT) program, which partners with Fallon Park Elementary School to provide health care services to families in need. To date, Delta Dental has contributed more than \$100,000 to the program. Our community appreciates all of its efforts.



COVID-19 Update:

Last week in Virginia there was an average of 9.7 daily cases of COVID-19 per every 100,000 residents. This is down from an average of 11.3 cases from one week prior. This week's positivity rate was 3.9%, down from 5.1% from last week. For more information, click [here](#).



Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Congressman. If my office can ever be of assistance, please contact my Washington office at (202) 225-5431.

For the latest updates from Washington and across the Sixth District, please follow my [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

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