

SIXTH DISTRICT PERSPECTIVES WITH CONGRESSMAN BEN CLINE

News From Congressman Ben Cline



Sixth District Perspectives with Congressman Ben Cline

While the week in Washington saw many missed opportunities to strengthen our Nation, it was an honor to begin the week back home with a remembrance of D-Day and the naming of the Salem VAMC Women's Health Clinic in honor of an American hero. With both gas prices and inflation reaching historic highs, the President is still pushing a Green New Deal climate agenda that makes us more dependent on our enemies for oil. And Biden's economic policy of higher taxes and more spending has led to a skyrocketing Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate. Further, in making sure our Veterans have better access to timely and quality care, I was pleased to introduce the bipartisan *VA Workforce Investment Act* this week to help recruit, train, and retain healthcare professionals to VA facilities, especially in rural areas like ours. Lastly, I met with several advocacy groups to hear how Congress can address their issues, from supporting our nurses and patients to the need for affordable homes in our communities.

Skyrocketing Gas Prices and 40-Year High Inflation

In a new 40-year high, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) numbers indicate that inflation rose 8.6% in May. That is a one percent increase from April's CPI levels, which means inflation is still rising rapidly, and hardworking Virginians are feeling the effects of it. Out-of-control spending and President Biden's assault on energy means the typical family is now having to spend about \$450 per month more to buy the same goods and services they did a year ago. Instead of expanding oil and gas leases, which President Biden halted by executive fiat early in his Administration and continues to block, and by unleashing American energy by exploring and drilling domestically, the President has resorted to begging foreign countries, like Saudi Arabia, for oil and depleting the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

When the Democrat-led House and President Biden passed the \$1.9 trillion so-called "American Rescue Plan," they set the country on a course to soaring 40-year high inflation. Since President Biden took office, the CPI inflation gauge rose from 1.4% to most recently 8.6% in May 2022. Additionally, due to the President and House Democrats' Green New Deal priorities, the national average for a gallon of gasoline has more than doubled since Biden took office. On January 20, 2021, the day Joe Biden was sworn into the Presidency, the average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$2.39. Today, the national average for regular gas prices is over \$5 a gallon.

Doubling down on this bad news, the President has proposed a \$5.8 trillion, tax and spend budget. Biden's budget cuts \$428 million for Customs and Border Protection's budget in the midst of a border crisis. It skyrockets federal spending by a third compared to pre-pandemic levels, calls for \$2.5 trillion in tax hikes, and sets this country on a course of fiscal doom at a time when we're currently on the precipice of a recession. As a result, the Federal Reserve has stepped in to raise interest rates and slow the economy, further exacerbating the economic crisis. The Federal government must reign in spending to slow current inflation and prevent future, continued inflation, and I remained committed in voting to do so.



Gun Control

Following the tragedy at the elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, Congress has been considering a variety of solutions to prevent future acts of violence. These include funding for school resource officers, addressing mental health issues, hardening our schools through increased security, and better equipping law enforcement to address the threats of an active shooter. Unfortunately, House Democrats opted to pursue radical gun control legislation that would only serve to restrict the Constitutional freedoms of responsible gun owners rather than curb violence.

In a series of amendments, Democrats pushed through legislation that will do little other than further restrict the Constitutional rights of law-abiding gun owners. The amendments included provisions that raises the age to purchase semi-automatic firearms to 21 nationwide, enacts restrictive "safe storage" requirements that make it more difficult to access a firearm in an emergency, and, with limited exceptions, prohibits firearm purchases as a gift, which means a father could not purchase a firearm as a gift for his son or family member. Further, Democrats passed a red flag bill that expands the number of individuals who can be harassed or burdened by limiting their due process protections.

There is no denying we need to address the violence that permeates our society, and we need to better protect students and teachers so as to ensure parents that their children are safe. However, this partisan legislation will not accomplish that goal.



Speaking against gun control on the House Floor

The VA Workforce Investment Act

This week, as part of the *Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act* dealing with toxic exposures of burn pits, I joined with Congressman Chris Pappas in introducing the *VA Workforce Investment Act*. The legislation is a bipartisan effort to bolster VA's workforce and strengthen VA facilities' ability to better recruit and retain high-quality, highly skilled staff needed to properly serve Veterans seeking VA healthcare services. Making sure our Veterans have timely access to quality care is essential to meeting their unique healthcare needs. Ensuring areas like ours can recruit, train, and retain healthcare professionals in rural VA facilities is key to meeting this goal. I was pleased to work in a bipartisan effort with Congressman Pappas to provide incentives and utilize best practices to improve and expand medical staff within the VA Medical Systems, especially in rural areas like ours.



Meeting with Veterans from across the District

Honoring Retired Master Sergeant Silverine James

I was pleased to congratulate retired Army Master Sergeant Silverine James on the naming of the Salem VAMC Women's Health Clinic in her honor. Allowed to enlist by her mother, James joined the Army in 1949, and after leaving in 1951, she eventually returned to the service in 1953 as an administrative specialist at the New York Point of Embarkation. Though the Army was still segregated at the time of her rejoining, Mrs. James was given an assignment that would help lead to the integration of her company and later was a trailblazer while serving at Camp Zama in Japan as the only African American in the Judge Advocate General section of the Far East Command. By the time she retired in 1973, Master Sergeant James had completed 22 years of service. Taking a well-deserved year off after retirement, James began a job at the Salem VAMC where she spent nearly five years before taking a job with FEMA. In an article chronicling her life, Master Sergeant James said simply, "I gave my country the best part of my life." Congratulations on this well-deserved honor.



Honoring retired Master Sergeant Silverine James on the House Floor

Advocacy Meetings



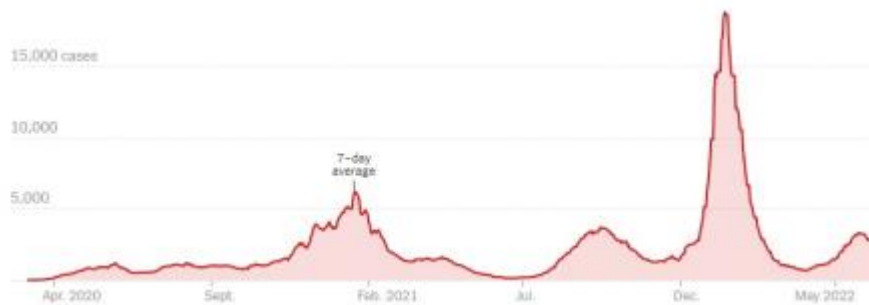
Meeting with the American Nurses Association



Meeting with the Manufactured Housing Institute

COVID-19 Update

Last week in Virginia there was an average 34 daily cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 residents. This week's COVID-19 test positivity rate was 17%. 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.

Ben Cline

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