

News From Congressman Ben Cline



CONGRESSMAN
BEN CLINE



Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

This week in Washington, I introduced two bipartisan bills; the first would rein in the powers of unelected bureaucrats at Federal agencies, and the second would provide veterans with a wider degree of options once their service to our Nation has been completed. In addition, I voted for legislation to help interpreters and others who risked their lives to aid the United States' war effort in Afghanistan over the last two decades. I also took to the floor to join my Republican colleagues in support of the Cuban people, who have been protesting the oppressive communist regime in Havana. I also recognized a Staunton VFW post as they celebrated their 75th anniversary and met with the Amherst County Lancers Softball team at Nationals Park as they were honored for winning this year's Class 4 State Championship. While Democrats continue to pursue harmful tax-and-spend policies that inflate prices and stifle our economic recovery, I will continue to advocate on behalf of the Sixth District residents I am so honored to represent.

Reining in Bureaucrats:

Our country is drowning in federal rules and regulations issued by unelected bureaucrats. That is why I introduced H.R. 4434 – the *Ensuring Accountability in Agency Rulemaking Act* along with Congressman Jared Golden (D-ME). This legislation would require all rules proposed by Federal agencies, except in limited circumstances, to be signed and issued by an individual appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Supreme Court has ruled in multiple cases, such as *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) and *Edmond v. United States* (1997), that only principal agency officers such as Department Heads and

Assistant Secretaries confirmed by the Senate have the constitutional authority to approve rules that carry the full force of the law. Unfortunately, compliance with constitutional rulemaking requirements has been inconsistent for far too long, which undermines accountability and opens agencies up to legal challenges because of improperly issued rules. This bill seeks to uphold the traditions and values of our Republic, and it will ensure there is no question surrounding the legality of rules coming out of our Federal agencies. Text of the bill can be found [here](#).

Supporting Veterans:

While we know that 50 percent of those leaving the military will go to college, there are those who will follow a different path. For some of these Veterans, they are seeking more options and want the choice to use their GI Bill benefit to start their own business. It's common sense to offer Veterans a choice in accessing resources, training, and support to pursue the American Dream to start a small business, create jobs, and generate growth in our economy. That is why I recently introduced the bipartisan *Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2021*, which establishes a 3-year pilot program to enable up to 250 benefit-eligible Veterans to use their GI Bill to start a new business or purchase an existing business or franchise. The program would be overseen by the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and Veterans would be required to take an entrepreneurial training course and have their business plan approved by the SBA before a grant would be awarded. It is my hope that this bill will further enable Veterans to achieve success following their service to our Nation. I recently sat down with WSLS to discuss the legislation.



Standing with Cuba:

Earlier this week, I offered my support for the Cuban people who have taken to the streets to protest the oppressive communist regime. Since its inception 62 years ago, the Communist Party has caused immeasurable harm and created unbearable conditions in Cuba. Its people want freedom and the ability to provide for their families, while knowing that their kids will be safe and healthy. Unfortunately, for most, Cuba is not that place, and it hasn't been for far too long.

Currently, the Cuban people are facing widespread power outages, the most severe food shortage since the 1990s, and inflation rates nearing 500 percent. Unfortunately, as the protests began, the government cut off its citizens' access to the internet to silence the dissent and hide the truth about what is really going on. And instead of trying to address the issues plaguing the Island Nation, they have instead decided to suppress those voicing concern. Since the protest began, more than 100 people have been detained or have gone missing, including artists, freedom activists, and priests. Thus, it should be no surprise that Cubans are marching in the streets. The world has seen the images of people waving American flags and folks in

years past fleeing in overflowing makeshift boats. They want what the United States is so blessed to have – freedom. Yet, there is a segment of our society bent on pushing our country toward the failed notion of communism and socialism. I recently joined my colleagues in sending a letter to world leaders urging them to stand for freedom and with the Cuban people. A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).



ALLIES Act:

The United States' war effort in Afghanistan was significantly aided by locals who placed themselves and their family in grave danger of retaliation from the Taliban for providing such support. That is why the United States offered Special Immigrant Visas to Afghans who worked with our military for at least two years. Unfortunately, delays in processing visa requests have put locals in even greater danger as American soldiers begin to withdraw from the theater. To right this wrong, the House passed, with my support, the *ALLIES Act*. This legislation will ensure that Afghan translators, contractors, and security personnel who gave vital aid to American troops during the war are provided the protection they deserve. There are thousands of visa applications awaiting approval before they can be released, and time is running out as the Taliban is rapidly seizing control of the country. The efforts of Afghan locals were crucial in keeping American troops safe, and we must take steps to honor the commitment our government made to keep these folks from harm.

Celebrating VFW Post 7814:

This week I was pleased to recognize the 75th anniversary of the Thomas-Fields Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7814, which was founded on July 11, 1946. When African American Veterans of World War II returned to their homes in the Staunton-Augusta area, they were unfortunately excluded from their local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post. Following their denied admittance, a group of forty-two Veterans then applied for a charter to organize their own post, which would carry the namesakes of Charles Thomas and Glenwood Fields, two African Americans from Staunton who died while serving their country in World War II. Since its formation, the Thomas-Fields Post has been an active civic organization in the African American community of Staunton and Augusta County, as well as played an active and significant role in local Veterans' activities. While the Post welcomes all Veterans, it continues to highlight the heritage of African American and minority Veterans who have served our Nation. Recently, Post 7814 was recognized as a Meritorious Post by the State VFW Federation for its outstanding work over the past five years and was also named an All-American Post by the National VFW Council for the first time in its history. I applaud the Thomas-Fields VFW Post for their tremendous work in our community and their efforts to aid those who served.





Passports Issues:

On March 19, 2020, the State Department paused the passport application process due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By June 2020, the Department was forced to recall essential employees to address a more than 1.8 million passport backlog, forcing applicants to delay their passport requests or face severe processing delays. Since that time, the Department has only fallen further behind as pandemic restrictions ease and more Americans feel comfortable traveling both domestically and internationally. This has created a surge of new passport applications in addition to the existing backlog. Rather than taking steps to expedite processing times by making passport offices more accessible to applicants or returning more employees to in-person work, the Department is instead encouraging applicants to pay an additional fee for expedited processing. Perhaps most egregiously, those additional fees do not guarantee timely delivery of an applicant's passport, for which the Department seems to have faulted delays by the U.S. Postal Service. According to the Department's website, applicants are asked to wait up to 18 weeks for routine passport services or pay an additional \$60 per application for expedited services to reduce their wait time to 12 weeks. Under normal operating capacity, these services would take between 6-8 weeks and 3 weeks, respectively. To date, the Department's efforts to resolve this matter have been ineffective and are needlessly costing taxpayers additional money to still receive their passports late. For this reason, a bipartisan group of my colleagues and I wrote to the State Department expressing these concerns and asked for a detailed plan outlining how the agency will address these issues. To read the full letter, click [here](#).



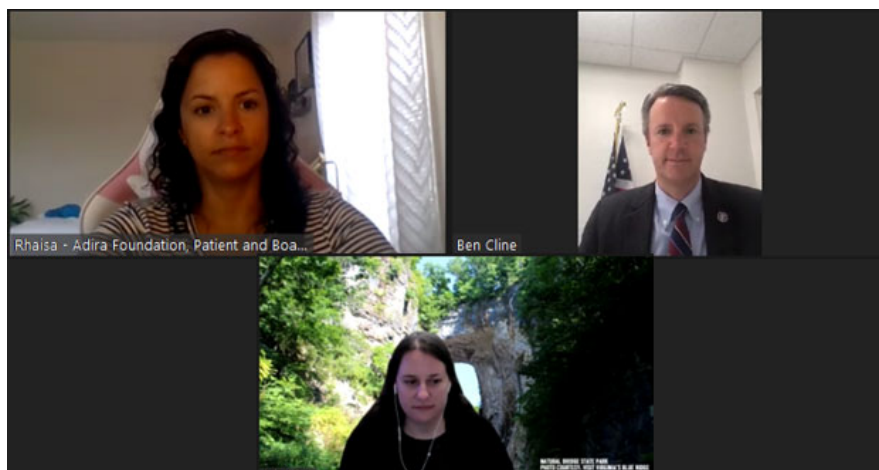
Honoring Student-Athletes:

It was a pleasure to join the Amherst Lancers Softball Team at Nationals Park here in Washington as they were recognized for winning their first-ever Virginia Class 4 State Championship. The Lancers won the title in extra innings in late-June, defeating the Hanover

Hawks two to zero. Heading into the top of the eighth, Coach Samantha Thacker told the team, “this is our time, this is our inning, we’ve got to stay settled and be patient,” – and they did just that. I was pleased to have honored the team on the House Floor following their victory and presented them with a copy of the Congressional Record when we met this week. Congratulations again to the players and coaches on a great season.



Constituent Meetings:



Rare Disease Advocates



NASA Langley Research Center



Advocating for a Free Cuba

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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