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News From Congressman Ben Cline



CONGRESSMAN  
**BEN** CLINE



## **Sixth District Perspectives** *with Congressman Ben Cline*

President Biden continues to push a foreign policy that weakens our allies and emboldens our enemies. Not only has he failed to stand up to Putin, which has encouraged Russian military hostilities against Ukraine, but he is also undermining relations with our close friend, Israel. The President's actions are unacceptable, but my Republican colleagues and I will continue fighting for America and its citizens' interests both aboard and here at home. For example, this week we are working to ensure federal agencies are serving the American people in a timely manner and championing the rights of parents. I will continue advocating for Sixth District residents here in Congress, and I look forward to connecting with folks across our region in-person when I'm not in Washington.

### **Standing with Israel:**

This week, as we recognized Holocaust Remembrance Day, we vowed never to forget the six million innocent Jewish lives that were stolen by the Nazis. Antisemitism has no place in society, and we must always stand against hate and evil wherever in the world it is occurring.

In that vein, I have long stood by Israel, the only democracy and our greatest ally in the Middle East. In Congress, I have cosponsored bipartisan legislation opposing the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and other efforts to delegitimize the state of Israel. Additionally, I cosponsored the *United States-Israel Cooperation Enhancement and Regional Security Act*, which seeks to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions, such as Israel's "Iron Dome" missile defense system to block enemy rockets. This week, I also joined my colleagues in sending a letter to President Biden requesting that he cut

funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This comes following his Administration's recent announcement that it would be funneling an additional \$99 million to the UNRWA after having already given them \$150 million in April of last year. The organization is poorly managed, facing numerous corruption scandals, including sexual misconduct, improper use of funds, retaliation against whistleblowers, nepotism, and also supports the end of Israel's sovereignty. Sending money to the UNRWA is an egregious use of taxpayer money, harms our interests in the region, and endangers key allies. The full letter can be found [here](#).



### **Working for You:**

This week, I was joined by 38 of my colleagues in sending a letter to President Biden demanding employees at Federal agencies return to in-person work to ensure timely constituent services. Despite federal personnel having early access to the COVID-19 vaccine and accommodations being made to ensure social distancing in the workplace, there are still several reports of agencies that handle direct constituent requests operating at a subpar level, primarily due to telework. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies turning to remote work was certainly a necessary precaution. However, as we've learned more about the virus and vaccines have become widely available, it's time for federal employees to return to the office. The months-long backlog constituents are facing to get a tax refund from the IRS, a passport from the State Department, or benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs - to name just a few examples - is unacceptable. Our letter to the President asks his Administration for information related to agency staffing levels and how he plans to address the shortages. The full letter can be found [here](#).

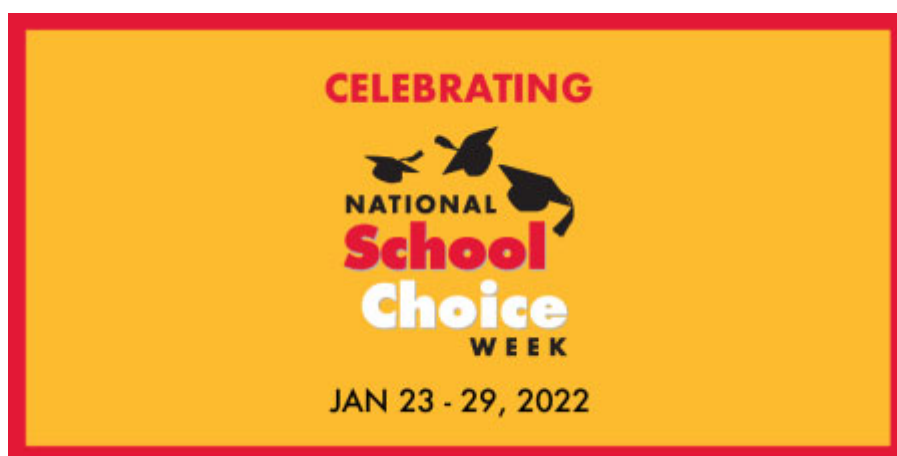
### **Fighting for Veterans:**

As was mentioned in the paragraph above, folks across the country are struggling to get timely responses from federal agencies. One such group adversely impacted by these delays are our Nation's Veterans and the difficulty they are having in obtaining their service records from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). This agency, which falls under the National Archives and Records Administration, is responsible for providing Veterans with a copy of their DD-214 which is required for Veterans to take advantage of the benefits, and any awards they have rightfully earned, including health, retirement, and loan benefits. Unfortunately, the NPRC has only been operating at 25 percent in-person staff since the pandemic began, which has caused record backlog. Currently, our brave men and women in uniform are waiting upwards of 18 months simply to receive this form, which is entirely inappropriate. My colleagues and I [called on](#) President Biden to address this situation immediately and live up to his promise to eliminate the backlog, restore the NPRC's pre-

pandemic response times, and re-instate on-site staffing reduced in response to COVID-19. Bureaucratic inefficiencies are no excuse to negatively impact our Veterans' financial livelihoods.

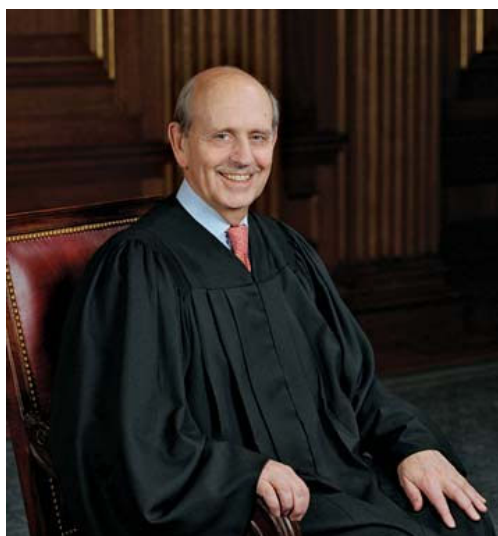
### **School Choice Week:**

This week, we celebrated National School Choice Week, a movement that seeks to recognize not only traditional K-12 public schooling, but innovative and advanced options for all students, like public charter schools, public magnet schools, private schools, online academies, and homeschooling. Children should not have to be subjected to failing schools simply because of where they reside. Parents should have the option to send their children to the school in which they believe will give their kids the greatest chance for success, whether that be a thriving public school with exceptional teachers or a variety of other options. I stand in defense of School Choice because competition serves the American education system well. Our future leaders of the next generations deserve choice, competition, and innovation in attaining the best possible education. We must put parents back in the driver's seat, which is what Governor Youngkin is fighting for in Virginia and I'm fighting for in Washington.



### **Justice Breyer:**


On Wednesday, Justice Stephen Breyer announced that he would be stepping down from the Supreme Court sometime this summer. As nominees begin to be discussed, I urge President Biden to appoint a textualist or originalist to the bench who will serve as a good steward for the Constitution and for the rights of American citizens. The Constitution of the United States has made this country the longest-lasting Democratic-Republic in history, and the American people deserve a Justice who respects our founding documents.





### **Mobile Office Hours:**

Virginia's Sixth District stretches more than 150 miles from Strasburg in the north to Roanoke in the south. While I have four District offices throughout our region in Harrisonburg, Staunton, Roanoke, and Lynchburg, my goal has always been to make myself and my staff as accessible as possible to folks in the Sixth District. For that reason, my staff regularly hold Mobile Office Hours throughout the District to assist residents with any issues they may have with a Federal agency, as well as hear folks' concerns regarding legislative matters. This coming week, my staff will hold Mobile Office Hours in Amherst, Front Royal, and Elkton. For more information, please visit my website [here](#).



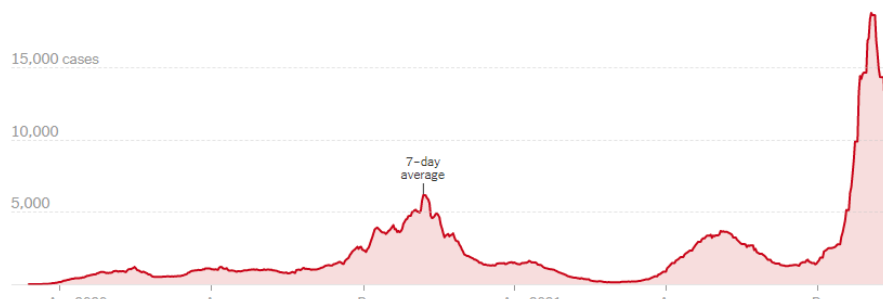
**Staff Mobile Office Hours**  
**Amherst**  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 1  
**Time:** 9:00am - 10:30am  
**Location:** Amherst County Administration Building

**Front Royal**  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 2  
**Time:** 10:00am - 12:00pm  
**Location:** Samuels Public Library

**Elkton**  
**Date:** Thursday, February 3  
**Time:** 11:30am - 12:30pm  
**Location:** Elkton Area Community Center

### **COVID-19 Update:**

This week in Virginia there was an average of **147.8** cases of COVID-19 per every 100,000 residents. This is down from an average of **194.6** cases from one week prior. This week's positivity rate was **29.9%**, down from **33.3%** 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.



**Washington D.C.**  
2443 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
**Phone: (202) 225-5431**

**Harrisonburg Office**  
70 N Mason St  
Suite 110  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
**Phone: (540) 432-2391**

**Lynchburg Office**  
916 Main St  
Suite 300  
Lynchburg, VA 24504  
**Phone: (434) 845-8306**

**Roanoke Office**  
10 Franklin Rd SE  
Suite 510  
Roanoke, VA 24011  
**Phone: (540) 857-2672**

**Staunton Office**  
117 S Lewis St  
Suite 215  
Staunton, VA 24401  
**Phone: (540) 885-3861**

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