

News From Congressman Ben Cline



Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

Once again the American people were failed by the Democratic leadership in the U.S. Congress. After days of canceling scheduled votes in an attempt by Speaker Pelosi to get her caucus in line, Democrats failed to pass their bloated "infrastructure" package, even after a Capitol Hill visit from President Biden. Instead, they passed a 30-day extension of the existing surface transportation law. However, the fight is not over. Speaker Pelosi will use the next 30 days to attempt to wrangle the votes she needs to pass the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill, which serves as the key for progressives to unlocking the massive \$4.3 trillion tax and spending spree reconciliation legislation.

We also heard this week from Generals Milley and McKenzie, as well as Secretary of Defense Austin, regarding the disastrous withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. These advisors testified that they recommended leaving a stabilizing force in country, which is in direct contradiction to the President's claims.

On a more positive note, there was movement on several pieces of legislation that I have cosponsored, including the *Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act*, which was signed into law. Further, this week, I took action to support our veterans, expressed residents' concerns to the US Postal Service, and honored a local charitable foundation. It was a busy few days, but I appreciate the honor to serve on your behalf.

"Infrastructure":

The House was in disarray this week as the Speaker tried desperately to unite her party around a \$1.2 trillion boondoggle infrastructure package. After days of cancelling votes, the Speaker was forced to temporarily concede after she and President Biden failed to get the bill over the finish line. The far-Left wing of their caucus refuses to vote for the \$1.2 trillion package unless the behemoth \$4.3 trillion reconciliation bill is passed first in the Senate. This delay is a win for the American people as neither bill truly addresses infrastructure and instead prioritizes Green New Deal initiatives and pork barrel spending, all the while raising taxes on American families and saddling future generations with crippling debt.

By the time Friday evening came and no deal was reached, the Speaker was forced to pass a 30-day extension of the existing surface transportation law. I voted no when the bill came to the Floor because this legislation is simply a tool being used by the Speaker to buy more time that will be used to coerce Democrats to support the larger "infrastructure" package. I will continue to oppose these two bills as they would be detrimental to the long-term viability of the US economy and would cause inflation to soar to even higher levels than we are already experiencing.



Democrats Mismanagement of Government:

The past few days once again highlighted the dysfunction that occurs when Democrats are left to govern. After playing a game of "chicken" by trying to tie passage of a Continuing Resolution to fund the government to an increase in the debt ceiling, the Left was forced to split the bills in order to avert a government shutdown. While the House and Senate did pass a CR to keep the government open, the debt ceiling issue still remains. Contrary to Democrat claims, the responsibility for a default would fall squarely on the shoulders of the Left. Democrats control the White House, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, and they have the procedural tools and time necessary to raise the debt ceiling ahead of Treasury's deadline. However, if Democrats would like this to be a bipartisan initiative, they must make serious reforms to rein in reckless spending.

Afghanistan Revelations:

The withdrawal from Afghanistan was an avoidable disaster and the following facts are indisputable: hundreds of Americans were abandoned and many remain stranded, thousands of Afghan allies are still stuck with little hope of escape, billions of dollars worth of US provided military equipment are now in the hands of the Taliban, thousands of hardened Al Qaeda and ISIS terrorists were freed from prison, 10 innocent Afghans were killed in a botched airstrike, and 13 of our brave service members were murdered by a coward in a suicide vest.

Prior to the withdrawal, President Biden repeatedly said that the Taliban takeover was not inevitable; that we had plenty of time to safely evacuate Americans and Afghan allies; and that

this was not going to be like the Fall of Saigon. When all of these events did eventually happen, he claims his military advisors had not warned him of these possibilities nor that he had received a recommendation to leave a stabilizing force of US troops in country to prevent such a disaster. However, this week, those assertions by the President were contradicted by Secretary Austin, General Milley, and General McKenzie during their testimony before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. It's clear that President Biden ignored the advice of his top military advisors, which resulted in a disastrous and deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Finally, it is ridiculous that Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Scheller is, to date, the only military official who has suffered any consequence for the failed Afghanistan withdrawal. For speaking out and demanding accountability from civilian and military leadership LtCol Scheller was removed from command and ultimately placed in the brig. This is unacceptable, and my colleagues and I demanded he be removed from confinement immediately. The full letter can be found [here](#).



Congressional Budget Transparency Act:

Throughout my career, I have worked to make government at all levels more transparent to the people it serves. Transparency in and of itself is key to good governance and is not a partisan issue. That is why I was pleased to work with both sides of the aisle to get the *Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act* signed into law. Congressional budget justifications are plain language explanations of how agencies propose to spend money that they request from Congress. While agencies produce an annual congressional budget justification, they are not always made publicly available. With this bill now being signed into law, agencies are required to post those justifications on a single, searchable, publicly available database. This is a win in ensuring the Federal government is more accountable to the taxpayer.



THE WHITE HOUSE

BRIEFING ROOM

Bills Signed: S. 272 and S. 325

SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 • STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

On Friday, September 24, 2021, the President signed into law:

S. 272, the “Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act of 2021,” which requires that agency budget justification materials be made publicly available online,

Thank you to Senators Peters, Portman, Carper, Cornyn, and Ernst, and Representatives Quigley, Comer, Holmes Norton, Fitzpatrick, Cooper, Khanna, Axne, and Cline for their leadership; and

S. 325, which extends by two years the deadline for the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children to submit its report to the President and Congress,

Thank you to Senators Murkowski, Schatz, Sullivan, and Tester and Representatives Young, Case, and Kahele for their leadership.

Veterans Backlog:

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is the central repository of personnel-related records for both the military and civil services of the United States Government. Unfortunately, the agency is currently operating at only 10 percent capacity, despite a \$15 million appropriation from Congress. As a result, the NPRC has a backlog of more than half a million records requests – predominantly for DD-214 forms – that have been unfulfilled. A DD-214 form is a Veteran’s primary document used to prove his or her service in the United States military. It is required to obtain an identification card needed to receive Veteran benefits like health and dental care, access preferential hiring for federal jobs, shop and receive services at military bases, and more. Without this verification, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Veterans to access the benefits they have earned through hard work and sacrifice to our country. My colleagues and I recently wrote to the President, the Archivist of the United States, and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to urge them to take swift action to address this issue. Veterans are our Nation’s heroes, and they should not be left behind because of bureaucratic red-tape and staffing shortages. To read the full letter, click [here](#).

Solving Postal Issues:

The United States Postal Service (USPS) provides a vital national service, especially for those in rural areas like ours. Unfortunately, my office hears regularly from Sixth District residents about frustrations they have with the USPS. Chief among these concerns is slow mail delivery or folks not receiving their mail at all. This is a serious issue that must be addressed. In addition to this, residents often experience issues with facility accessibility, employee interactions, and the safety of mailbox locations. Please know that I am aware of these difficulties and am taking steps to address them. This week, I met with the USPS government affairs team to voice these concerns and called on them to take corrective action. Rest assured I will keep constituents apprised of any update related to this situation. In the meantime, if you are experiencing issues with the USPS, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of my District Offices listed at the bottom of this page.



Rep. Cline meets with representatives from the USPS

Community Foundation:

This week I was pleased to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Community Foundation for Rockbridge, Bath and Alleghany. In its first year as an independent organization in 2011, the Foundation was able to provide \$32,000 in grants to the community. Through the support of many individuals, families, and businesses over the years, the organization has grown exponentially, and in the past ten years the Community Foundation has been able to grant a cumulative \$2.5 million to nonprofit organizations, projects, and programs across the organization's service area. Just this year alone, the group will be awarding more than \$300,000 in community grants and an additional \$30,000 in scholarships. These grants are made possible through the generosity of individuals and businesses and primarily support projects related to arts and culture, community betterment, education, health, and human services. In celebration of their 20 years, the organization pledged to give away \$20,000 in 20 days to various nonprofits throughout our region. The work of the Community Foundation is truly inspiring, and I thank them for their tireless efforts. I wish the organization another 20 plus years of success.



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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