

News From Congressman Ben Cline



CONGRESSMAN
BEN CLINE



Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

As Americans got more bad news on the economy and inflation last week, the House wrapped up its final few days of session before the new year by continuing to ignore our need for the federal government to live within its means. By passing a \$2.5 trillion increase in the debt limit without much-needed spending reforms, my Democrat colleagues have shown that they do not understand the severity of the debt crisis this country is facing, nor do they have any intention of lifting a finger to address it. On a more positive note, Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia announced his opposition to President Biden's Build Back Better Bill, which I refer to as "Build Back Broke." With his opposition, the bill as written does not have the votes to proceed in the Senate. Further, I took action recently to address the bureaucratic backlog at the IRS, which has caused massive delays in processing returns. Before heading back to Washington, I was also able to hear directly from my constituents as I resumed my pledge to hold in-person town meetings. Residents of Amherst County, Buena Vista, and Highland County were able to directly let me know their views and positions on what is happening in Washington, D.C. I also enjoyed the opportunity to join "Santa Armstrong" for his annual toy giveaway in Harrisonburg. While there is more to be done in Washington, I am looking forward to spending the next few weeks in our community meeting with as many folks as I can during this holiday season.

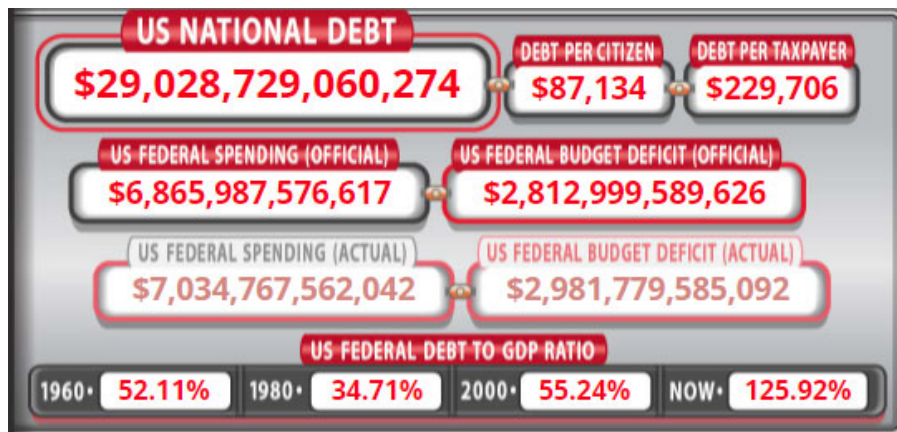
Build Back Broke:

Over the past several months the Left has fought tooth and nail to ram President Biden's Build Back Broke tax and spend spree through Congress. And while Speaker Pelosi was able

to twist enough arms to pass it in the House, it appears as though the legislation has hit a serious roadblock in the Senate. This week, Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) announced he would not support this massive social spending bill, which the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated would cost \$5 trillion and add \$3 trillion to the deficit over the next ten years. Senator Manchin expressing his formal opposition to the legislation as written effectively kills the bill as Senate Democrats no longer have the fifty votes needed to pass it. This news is an early Christmas present to the American people as Biden's Build Back Broke bill would have been detrimental to our Nation. It would have added to sky-high inflation, killed jobs, and driven up energy costs. In his own words, Senator Manchin said, "My Democratic colleagues in Washington are determined to dramatically reshape our society in a way that leaves our country even more vulnerable to the threats we face. I cannot take that risk with a staggering debt of more than \$29 trillion and inflation taxes that are real and harmful to every hard-working American at the gasoline pumps, grocery stores and utility bills with no end in sight." I applaud Senator Manchin for his courage to stand up to his party and for the American people.

Enabling Spending:

The national debt recently topped \$29 trillion and continues to grow at a record pace. Unfortunately, that did not stop the Democrats this week from raising the debt ceiling by an additional \$2.5 trillion. To make matters worse, the Majority offered no reforms that would help rein in spending and get our fiscal house in order. And while the Left claims that raising the debt ceiling is merely about past spending, that could not be further from the truth. By taking this action, Democrats are ensuring they have room for more spending. While I agree Congress should not play political games with the debt ceiling, Democrats should not ignore the likelihood of the financial crisis accelerating if President Biden and the Left pass legislative proposals like the Build Back Broke Bill. Our country and our economy cannot continue to sustain these levels of spending, particularly without appropriate offsets or budget reforms.



Inflation:

Since taking office, President Biden's tax and spend policies, coupled with shutdowns and mandates, have stifled our recovery from COVID and caused an economic crisis. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the skyrocketing costs of consumer goods due to soaring inflation. The surge has been caused by out-of-control government spending and Americans are paying the price as inflation rates reached a 39-year high last week. Since November of 2020, the Consumer Price Index has risen 6.9% - the fastest increase since 1982. Further, this crisis is exacerbating other aspects of the economy as well. Due to inflation and the decreased buying power of the dollar, real wages have decreased in [eight out of ten months](#) since the President's first full month in office. So not only are people paying more for goods, but they have less money in their pocket to pay for them. And finally, November was the worst jobs report of Biden's presidency, falling more than 350,000 jobs short of economists' expectations.



IRS Backlog:

As of November 12, 2021, the IRS had a backlog of 5.9 million unprocessed returns. This massive backlog is causing significant and unnecessary burdens for families and small businesses who can't get answers from the IRS about why their returns have not been processed. And as tax season approaches, the agency is in danger of falling into a vicious backlog cycle that will harm millions of taxpayers. After hearing from countless Sixth District constituents and following my own office's outreach, it is clear the IRS is failing to meet its mission to, "provide America's taxpayers top quality service by helping them understand and meet their tax responsibilities." Given these serious concerns, my colleagues and I wrote to the Director of the IRS demanding answers as to how the agency plans to address the backlog issue. To read the full letter, click [here](#).



Connecting With Constituents:

As a Member of Congress, a top priority of mine is to be accessible to the constituents of the Sixth District. For this reason, I made a commitment when I was elected to hold frequent town halls throughout the District to ensure I could hear first-hand from those I represent and bring their views back to Washington. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I hosted 25 town halls – with at least one in each locality. Unfortunately, in March of 2020, for health and safety reasons my office suspended in-person forums and moved to virtual events. To that end, I hosted 14 telephone town halls during the pandemic to help me stay connected to residents throughout our area. However, as most COVID restrictions have lifted, I was pleased to host my first set of

in-person town halls this week since their suspension. On Monday, I held town halls in Amherst County, Buena Vista, and Highland County. I enjoyed these events and appreciated residents sharing their concerns with me. I look forward to holding many more forums in the coming year, and I encourage all constituents to visit my Facebook page, website, and keep an eye on their local newspaper and this website for town hall announcements.



Santa Armstrong's Toy Giveaway:

For the past nine years, Adam Armstrong of Penn Laird has purchased toys and distributed them to kids in need throughout low-income areas of Harrisonburg. This annual event has become known as "Santa Armstrong's Christmas Hope Toy Giveaway" and has been getting bigger and bigger over the years. This year, Santa Armstrong and his team filled three large trucks with presents and gave away more than \$28,000 in gifts to area residents. Our community is so grateful for all Mr. Armstrong does to help folks during the Christmas season, and I was very pleased that I had the opportunity to join him during this year's giveaway. The event truly embodies the holiday spirit and serves as a reminder of the true meaning of Christmas.





COVID-19 Update:

This week in Virginia there was an average of **30.0** cases of COVID-19 per every 100,000 residents. This is up from an average of **27.6** cases from one week prior. This week's positivity rate was 8.8%, up from 8.1% 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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