

News From Congressman Ben Cline



Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

As the Representative for the Sixth District, I am committed to fighting for the rights and freedoms of my constituents. To that end, I voiced my strong opposition to the Biden Administration's plan to stifle speech through the creation of a "Disinformation Governance Board," and I took action to ensure women's sports are not eroded by allowing biological men to compete in female athletics. Additionally, in a continued effort to punish Russia for its aggression, my colleagues and I passed several pieces of legislation in the House aimed at bolstering our allies in the region and expanding the President's ability to further sanction the Kremlin. More so, with the Bureau of Economic Analysis' announcement that the United States' Gross Domestic Product shrunk by 1.4% in the first quarter, I took time to address the President's budget, which would further exacerbate our country's dire financial situation and questioned Biden Administration officials about misappropriated taxpayer dollars. Finally, on a more solemn note, this week I paid tribute to the life and legacy of Rockbridge County's own, Bobby Berkstresser, who passed away recently at the age of 71. I am looking forward to being back in western Virginia next week during District Work Period and will be traveling throughout the region touring several businesses and meeting with those I am honored to serve.

Big Brother:

In an assault on the First Amendment and free speech, the Biden Administration announced that it will be creating a "Disinformation Governance Board" under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security. This is the epitome of Big Brother and should be of concern to every American. The Department of Homeland Security should demonstrate its ability to handle the issues they are currently tasked with, such as securing the border, rather than monitoring and regulating speech that will ultimately lead to government censorship, coverup, and propaganda. Americans should have the ability to evaluate both sides of an issue and

make decisions for themselves, rather than having the government tipping the scale one way or the other.



Misused COVID Funds:

The so-called "American Rescue Plan" opened the door for widespread misuse of federal tax dollars and helped contribute to the highest inflation rate in 41 years. Throughout the pandemic, more than \$190 billion was allocated in COVID relief funds to address lost opportunities in learning, but time and again we have seen stories of these funds being used on pork-barrel projects instead. For example, in a Whitewater, Wisconsin school district, the board voted to allocate almost 80 percent of their \$2 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund grant to build synthetic turf fields for the football team. The athletic director argued that he did not think the district would approve a local referendum for the football fields and thus the school board chose to spend American taxpayer dollars intended to assist with projects related to learning loss and the impact of COVID-19 on athletic facilities. An Iowa school district spent \$100,000 of COVID relief money to renovate the weight room and add new flooring, an East Lyme School District in Connecticut spent \$175,000 to address drainage problems on the baseball field, a Pulaski County, Kentucky school district spent \$1 million in COVID relief dollars on resurfacing two outdoor tracks, and the list goes on and on. This is wrong, and I asked the Education Secretary about what his agency is doing to address these misused funds and what steps will be taken to prevent such abuse in the future.



Combating Russia:

If Russia is going to pursue unprovoked military action in Ukraine, then the United States and the rest of the world must remain united in its action to combat the Kremlin's aggression. This week, the House took several steps to strengthen our alliances in the region and expand the ability of other nations to counter Russian cyber-attacks. Learn more about several of the bills below.

- [H.R. 6930](#) - gives the President the authority to seize assets belonging to people whose wealth comes from the corrupt political support of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which may only be used for post-conflict reconstruction of Ukraine
- [H.R. 6089](#) - expands provisions in section 107 of the *Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* to now include unmanned combat aerial vehicles to the list of weapons covered by the required sanctions
- [H.R. 496](#) - directs the President to look at the violations of religious freedom taking place in Ukraine by Russia, or Russian- affiliated non-state groups, when determining the severity of concern for religious freedom under Federal law
- [H.R. 7372](#) - establishes an interagency working group that must report to Congress to address semiconductor supply chain issues, such as impacts on global supply chains, and provide recommendations for legislative steps Congress can take to compensate for the disruptions caused by Russia's attack on Ukraine
- [H.R. 7314](#) - requires the Department of State to report to Congress on how China is helping Russia evade sanctions or export controls, if China is supplying technology to support Russia's intelligence capabilities and if China is helping to support Russia's misinformation

Biden's Budget:

As signs of a recession continue, Americans face unprecedented costs from the grocery store to the gas pump. Yet President Biden's proposed budget doubles down on inflationary spending and Washington mandates and bungles the major economic crises American families are facing. The President's proposed budget spends \$73 trillion over the next decade and would be funded by the highest sustained tax burden in our Nation's history. As Americans pay record prices at the pump, this budget proposal prioritizes radical Green New Deal policies and continues Biden's destruction of American energy independence with increased taxes on the oil and gas industry. Further, it pushes unnecessary and already rejected "Build Back Better" social programs and provides benefits to illegal aliens, while doing nothing to address the crisis at our southern border. Know that I will continue to hold Biden Administration officials accountable and demand justifications for the spending spree that is this budget. I strongly oppose the President's proposal and urged my colleagues on the House Floor this week to reject it should it come up for a vote.



Protecting Women's Sports:

Allowing biological men to compete in women's athletics is simply wrong. That is why, in an effort to promote fairness, I am a cosponsor of the *Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act*. This legislation prohibits the use of Title IX funds to support women's sports in which biological male athletes are allowed to participate against biological female athletes. This bill is vital to ensuring our daughters have the right to compete on a level playing field and have equal access to the opportunities that hard work in athletics can afford them. In an effort to force a vote on this important bill, I signed a discharge petition, which would immediately bring the legislation to the House Floor should it receive 218 signatures.

Honoring Bobby Berkstresser:

It was with a heavy heart this week that I took to the House Floor to honor the life and legacy of my good friend, Bobby Berkstresser, who recently passed away at the age of 71. Bobby was truly a kind soul who had a passion for both people and business. In 1981, he purchased his first truck stop, Lee-Hi Travel Plaza, in Lexington. At the time, he had only eight employees on payroll, but over the years, he grew it exponentially and was able to expand. When Bobby passed, he employed more than 400 people, and his second business, White's Travel Center in Raphine, was the largest truck stop east of the Mississippi – a fact of which he was definitely proud. He brought honor and pride to the job, and in 2018, he was honored with the NATSO Hall of Fame Award for his contributions to the industry. His employees say, "He not only was your boss, he encouraged you, and was family to a lot of people." Aside from owning White's and Lee-Hi, Bobby was deeply committed to his community. He regularly contributed to local nonprofits, in addition to serving on several boards including the Bank of Botetourt, Rockbridge YMCA, Rockbridge United Way, Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, former Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital, and NATSO. It goes without saying that Rockbridge County lost a giant. His passing will be felt by this community for quite some time, and my thoughts and prayers remain with his family.



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, members of my staff regularly hold Mobile Office Hours throughout the District to assist residents who don't live near a district office. This coming week, my staff will hold Mobile Office Hours in Front Royal and Elkton. For more information, please visit my website [here](#).



Staff Mobile Office Hours

Warren County

Date: Wednesday, May 4

Time: 10:00am to 12:00pm

Location: Samuels Public Library

Elkton

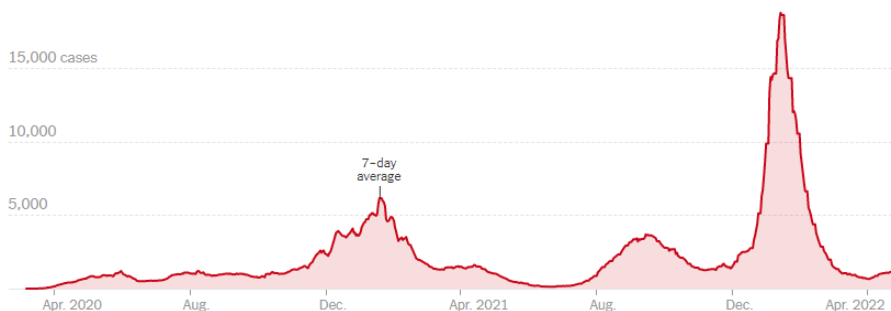
Date: Thursday, May 5

Time: 11:30am to 12:30pm

Location: Elkton Area Community Center

COVID-19 Update:

Last week in Virginia there was an average of **15.3** daily cases of COVID-19 per every 100,000 residents. This is up from an average of **12.9** cases from one week prior. This week's positivity rate was 7.8%, up from an average of 6.8% 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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