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FWD: SIXTH DISTRICT PERSPECTIVES WITH CONGRESSMAN BEN CLINE

News From Congressman Ben Cline



CONGRESSMAN  
**BEN CLINE**



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

This past week was a continuation of Speaker Pelosi's House passing legislation that didn't go through the normal committee process and allowed few, if any, amendments from the Republican minority. However, in a rare show of bipartisanship, the House did pass my *COVID-19 Bankruptcy Relief Extension Act*, which will provide significant aid to struggling small businesses. Last week I also had the opportunity to visit with constituents in Verona and hear from advocacy groups about the issues that matter most to them. As the House wrapped up a busy two months of session, I am looking forward to being home in the Sixth District these

next few weeks connecting with those I am honored to represent.

### **Immigration Crisis:**

When I visited the southern border two years ago, I saw firsthand the tremendous job that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) was doing to curbing the influx of illegal immigration. These dedicated men and women put themselves on the line each day to ensure the safety and security of the American people. The difference between then and now was that President Trump made sure our border patrol agents had the resources necessary to do their jobs effectively when there was an uptick in illegal crossings. Sadly, however, we are once again facing an immigration crisis. When President Biden assumed office, he essentially slapped an open sign on our southern border. In the past two months, the President has halted construction of the border wall, reduced immigration enforcement, reimplemented “catch and release”, promised citizenship for millions, and cancelled asylum agreements with our Central and South American partners. These actions have created a disastrous situation.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 200,000 individual migrants have already illegally crossed the border, which is a seven-year high and a 173 percent increase from this time last year. There has also been a 163 percent increase in families apprehended these past two months. On top of this, at least four individuals on the FBI’s terrorist screening database have come across our border illegally in recent months, and apprehensions at the border jumped 28 percent last month compared to January. Even President Biden’s own Secretary of Homeland Security said we are on pace to encounter more individuals on the southwest border than we have in the last 20 years. There is no denying that the entire situation is a humanitarian, economic, and national security crisis. Yet despite all of this, the House passed two bills last week that reward illegal immigration and say to the world that our laws no longer matter – I voted against both pieces of legislation. As your Congressman, I will fight to secure our borders and protect the homeland of the United States.



### **Aiding our Small Businesses:**

In 2019, I introduced and had signed into law the *Small Business Reorganization Act*, which simplifies the process for entrepreneurs to use bankruptcy as a means of reorganization. Under this bill, when initially passed, businesses with less than \$2.7 million of debt were able to file for bankruptcy in a timelier and more cost-effective manner. While in bankruptcy reorganization, a small business can negotiate with creditors while keeping the doors open, employees on payroll, and suppliers and vendors paid. In 2020, a provision in the *CARES Act* raised the \$2.7 million threshold to \$7.5 million. This provision was set to expire on March 27, 2021. Therefore, the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Jerry Nadler, and I introduced, and the House passed, the *COVID-19 Bankruptcy Relief Extension Act of 2021*, which extends this temporary

provision, and thus the \$7.5 million threshold, for an additional year. By extending the debt threshold for eligibility, significantly more businesses who have been impacted by government mandated lockdowns will benefit from the *Small Business Reorganization Act*, which has served as a lifeline for struggling businesses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, since the bills inception, 80 percent of small business debtors have chosen to proceed under the provisions of my bill.



### Domestic Violence Legislation:

Domestic violence is a persistent problem across our nation, and the effect of lockdowns on families in many states has led to an increase in reports of domestic violence. As a former domestic violence prosecutor, I have supported efforts at the local, state, and federal level to provide resources to those programs that help domestic violence victims. Last year, I introduced the bipartisan *POWER Act* with Congresswoman McBath (D-GA), which aimed to ensure that support services remained available to domestic violence victims during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two bills affecting domestic violence programs came before the House last week, and while I supported the intent of both bills, one of the bills was unfortunately hijacked for partisan purposes. The first bill, which I supported, was a bill to *Sustain the Crime Victims Fund*, H.R. 1652. The bill strengthens the *Victims of Crime Act*, or VOCA, which funds thousands of victim service providers around the country, including programs serving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, trafficking, and drunk driving. VOCA grants also fund victim compensation, including paying medical bills, covering lost wages, and paying for funeral costs. It is critical that we ensure that these important grants continue to support victims across the country, and I was pleased to support passage of this bill. The second bill was to reauthorize the *Violence Against Women Act*, a law that I strongly support. Unfortunately, the previously bipartisan law that I have supported and voted for was amended to include several controversial provisions that I could not support. These included provisions that undermine and jeopardize due process; that curtail prosecutorial discretion; that weaken programs for female victims; that could re-victimize abused women; and that fail to provide religious hiring exemptions for faith-based grant recipients. For these reasons, I could not vote for the VAWA reauthorization proposed by Democrat leadership, and instead I supported and voted for the

Republican substitute to re-enact the most recent bipartisan version of the VAWA law.

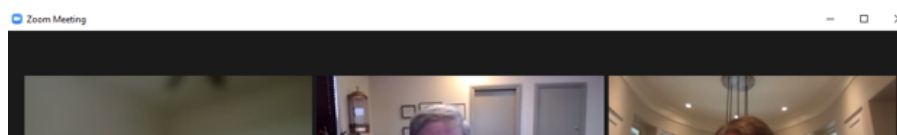
**Project GROWS:**

I enjoyed the opportunity to visit Project GROWS in Verona last week. Founded in 2010, the group partners with various community organizations to address childhood obesity, malnutrition, and diabetes in the Shenandoah Valley through farm-based education. The group also strives to support its students' physical, mental, and social well-being. Our region thanks Project GROWS for addressing these pressing issues affecting our region's youth.

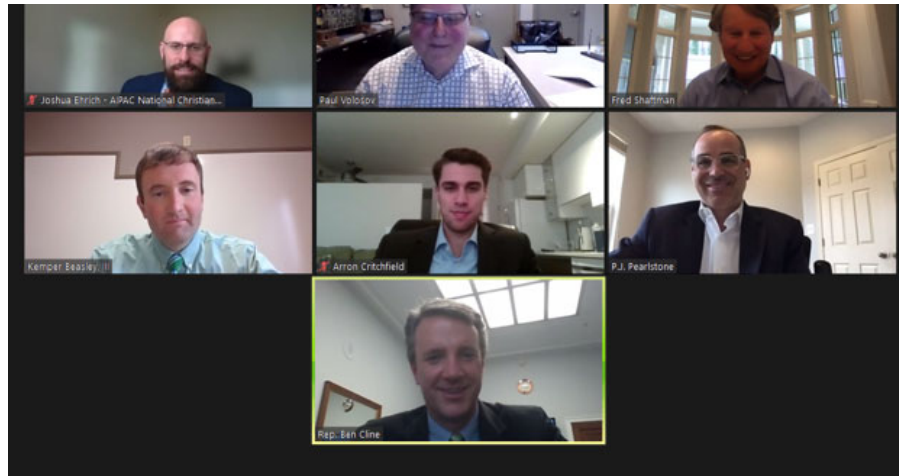


**AIPAC:**

I was pleased to meet with members of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's national board to discuss continued steps to ensure the safety and security of this vital ally. I have always been a staunch supporter of Israel, and in the 116th Congress I cosponsored several pieces of legislation seeking to protect the Holy Land. One such bill was H.R. 1837 – the *United States-Israel Cooperation Enhancement and Regional Security Act*, which authorizes increased security assistance to Israel, including the transfer of reserve stock weapons and boosting defense funding over the next five years. Further, I cosponsored H. Res. 246 - *Opposing efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel and the Global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement* targeting Israel. The BDS movement seeks to weaken the Jewish State's footing on the international stage, which is simply unacceptable. I will continue to support our closest ally in the Middle East in the 117th Congress, and I look forward to cosponsoring similar legislation when introduced.







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

As of March 21, 2021, Virginia has had 604,904 total cases of COVID-19, including confirmed lab tests and clinical diagnoses, according to the Virginia Department of Health. The current death toll in the Commonwealth stands at 10,117. Further, according to the VDH's COVID-19 vaccine data dashboard, as of March 20th, 2,039,437 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and 1,114,156 people are fully vaccinated.

### **Additional COVID Information:**

The IRS announced this week that it will delay the federal April 15 tax-filing deadline until May 17. Taxpayers can also delay payment of any money owed to the IRS until said date. Additionally, Virginia extended its filing deadline to May 17 as well.

Further, the Salem VA Health Care System announced recently that vaccination appointments are now open for all enrolled veterans. Individuals are encouraged to reach out to their primary care teams or call the vaccination hotline between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday to schedule appointments. To schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment, veterans should call 540-982-2463 and choose Option 2.

Finally, last week the House approved a 60-day extension of the Paycheck Protection Program which is set to expire on March 31. If passed by the Senate and signed into law, the new deadline would be May 31. To apply for a PPP loan, 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.

*Ben Cline*

**Washington D.C. Office**  
2443 Rayburn  
House Office Building  
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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