



## Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

There are few better signs of a rebounding economy than businesses expanding their operations, and this week, I was pleased to see two Waynesboro companies do just that. While House, Senate and White House leaders continue to negotiate over additional coronavirus legislation and have begun to negotiate the outlines of an agreement to fund the government after October, no Floor action is scheduled in the House next week. However, House committees will be busy meeting next week to consider several pieces of legislation. This week also brought announcements from the Administration concerning White House tours and a telephone town hall for veterans. It was a great week traveling the Sixth District, and I continue to enjoy the opportunity to hear from constituents daily at events throughout our community.

### **Business Expansion:**

This week I was pleased to join Bloomaker, the leading producer and supplier of hydroponically grown flowers in the U.S., as they broke ground on a 22,000 square foot expansion of their facility in Waynesboro. This new warehouse will allow them to meet their largest demand to date and ship nearly 1.5 million amaryllis bulbs to stores across the country. The company currently employs more than 100 part-time seasonal workers

to help with the planting, harvesting, packaging, and shipping of its blooms and has plans to further expand its Waynesboro facility in the near future.

It was also announced this week that VIRTEX, an electronics manufacturing service company that provides services to military, aerospace and medical customers, would be introducing a new product line at its facility in Waynesboro. This expansion will create at least 40 new manufacturing jobs for area residents and is another example of our continued economic recovery.



### **Supporting Child Nutrition:**

I recently joined my Republican colleagues on the Education and Labor Committee in writing to Secretary Perdue urging the Department of Agriculture to review flexibilities allowed under law to our Nation's child nutrition program. Utilizing such flexibilities at the beginning of the coronavirus crisis allowed schools to provide meals to students in need and employing them again would enable educational institutions to continue doing so. I

was pleased that Secretary Perdue agreed with our recommendation and this week authorized schools to continue to provide meals to vulnerable students through the end of 2020. To read more about the USDA's decision, click [here](#). To read the full letter my colleagues and I sent to Secretary Purdue, click the image below.

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August 26, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As the 2020-2021 school year gets underway, schools may be struggling to implement new methods of teaching while simultaneously figuring out how to provide meals to vulnerable students. During these challenging times, we urge you to review the child nutrition program flexibilities allowed under the law and implement those flexibilities as quickly as possible.

We know the flexibilities utilized at the beginning of the pandemic helped schools provide meals to families in need. With a new school year starting amid the pandemic, it is critical that schools have the flexibility they need to continue providing meals to their students. This flexibility is particularly important since many school districts have announced a variety of plans, including modified in-person classes and meal services, hybrid education, and in some cases continued remote learning. Given the broad range of plans, we should ensure the federal programs that help feed students are flexible, easy to operate, and free of unnecessary burdens.

Therefore, we ask USDA to review the program flexibilities currently available within the child nutrition programs and expeditiously implement much needed flexibilities. Additionally, these program flexibilities should be tied to pandemic-related needs, which is why we also request that you implement the flexibilities for a specific length of time so schools aren't faced with uncertainty and burdensome paperwork and bureaucracy.

**COVID-19 Update:**

This week, the AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine entered Phase 3, the final phase of clinical trials. The Federal Government's task force, Operation Warp Speed, now has three vaccine candidates in the final phase of clinical trials. Earlier this month, the FDA Commissioner emphasized that no matter what, only a safe, effective vaccine will get final approval.


Currently, vaccine developers are searching for thousands of volunteers for these clinical trials. If you wish to participate or would like more information, click [here](#). Additionally, there is a need for plasma donations from those who have recovered from COVID-19 that may help treat people who have recently contracted the coronavirus. To find out if you are eligible and how to donate, click [here](#). Fueled by American ingenuity, scientists and doctors are working around the clock to develop a vaccine, improve and increase testing, and create more effective treatment plans.



**Veterans Benefits Administration Telephone Town Hall:**


The Under Secretary of the Veterans Benefits Administration, Dr. Paul Lawrence, will be hosting his second Virginia state-wide telephone town hall next Wednesday at 4pm for veterans in Virginia. He will discuss the benefits our servicemembers have rightly earned and then will take questions for approximately 45 minutes. To participate, dial (833) 380 -0417 during the time of the call.

**VBA Tele-Town Hall:**  
**VIRGINIA**



**Benefits Update**  
Sept 9<sup>th</sup> | 4PM ET

**Agenda**



1. Under Secretary Remarks on the State of VBA including COVID19 Changes (5-10 min)
2. Answer Veterans' Questions (45 min or more)

**How to Join**

1. Dial 833-380-0417 (suggested 10 min before)
2. Listen in on the VBA updates
3. Ask questions during the call

### **White House Tours:**

While most tours of federal buildings, including of the U.S. Capitol, remain suspended due to COVID-19, the White House announced this week that tours will resume in a limited capacity on September 12. Tours will be hosted two days a week instead of five, on Friday and Saturday, from 8:00am to 11:00am and the number of guests will be limited to 18% of normal capacity. Further, safety precautions will be in place such as the requiring of wearing masks, social distancing, and hand sanitizer will be readily available. To learn more about White House tours, please click [here](#) or call my office at (202) 225-5431.



### **Schools Reopening:**

With school aged children of my own, I am aware of the uncertainty that surrounds sending kids back to school. To help clarify school plans, over the last few weeks, I have



tried to provide you with the most up-to-date reopening information on school districts across the Sixth District. The below schools are slated to begin instruction this week.

[Amherst County Schools](#): School will start September 9<sup>th</sup>

- All elementary school students will be in school Monday through Thursday with block scheduling in place
- For middle and high school students, they will be split into groups. One group will go to school on Mondays and Wednesdays, the other on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with both groups doing at-home instruction on Fridays.
- Virtual learning is available for those who have requested.

[Back-to-school update.](#)

[Bedford County Schools](#): First day of school pushed back to September 8<sup>th</sup>

- Pre-K through sixth grade students will attend school daily starting after Labor Day for face-to-face instruction with reduced class sizes so physical distancing can be achieved.
- Seventh graders, eighth graders and high schoolers will receive primarily virtual instruction in the fall, with each student connected to a “learning coach” throughout the school day to provide support and determine days when students may need to come into buildings for individual or small-group interactions with teachers.

[Back-to-school update.](#)

[Highland County Schools](#): First day of school set for September 8<sup>th</sup>

- In-school option Plan A will have students attending school 5 days a week.
- Parents may choose Plan B for their students to have 100% virtual learning.

[Back-to-school update.](#)

[Lexington Schools](#): School set to begin remotely on September 8<sup>th</sup>

- 100% virtual start for the fall semester.
- The school board passed the changes at a remote special session Monday night, and will consider what to do next no later than its next meeting in October.

[Back-to-school update.](#)

[Rockbridge County Schools](#): Start date pushed back to September 8<sup>th</sup>

- Students grades 2 through 12 will learn 100 percent virtually for the first nine weeks.

- Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st grade students will attend in-person learning four days per week, breaking on Wednesdays for building sanitation.

[Back-to-school update.](#)

[Rockingham County Schools:](#) School set to open on September 10<sup>th</sup>

- Students will begin the year 100% virtual for grades 2-12 and will then transition to a hybrid model of both distance and virtual learning.
- Grades PK-1 will come to school 4 days of the week.

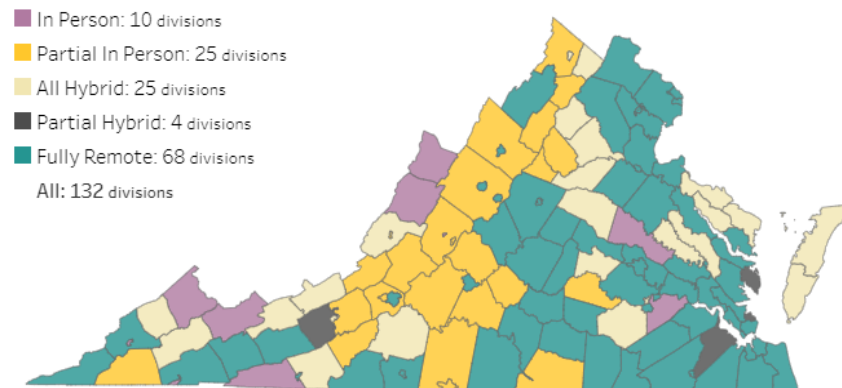
[Back-to-school update.](#)

[Warren County Schools:](#) School board will vote to push back start date to September 8<sup>th</sup>

- Preschool through 12th grade students will participate in a combination of in-person and remote instruction each week.
- Parents were asked to fill out an intent form online by July 17 to let school officials know whether their student would be attending classes online through the virtual academy or in person.

[Back-to-school update.](#)

For a full list of public schools' reopening plans, please 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.



<b>Washington D.C. Office</b> 1009 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-5431	<b>Harrisonburg Office</b> 70 N Mason St Suite 110 Harrisonburg, VA 22802 Phone: (540) 432-2391	<b>Lynchburg Office</b> 916 Main St Suite 300 Lynchburg, VA 24504 Phone: (434) 845-8306	<b>Roanoke Office</b> 10 Franklin Rd SE Suite 510 Roanoke, VA 24011 Phone: (540) 857-2672	<b>Staunton Office</b> 117 S Lewis St Suite 215 Staunton, VA 24401 Phone: (540) 885-3861
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