
News From Congressman Ben Cline



CONGRESSMAN
BEN CLINE



Sixth District Perspectives *with Congressman Ben Cline*

As Memorial Day approaches, our community expresses our profound gratitude for those who gave their lives in defense of our Nation. I am looking forward to joining Veterans and Gold Star Families across the Sixth District in remembering the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for a cause greater than self. While in the District this past week I also had the opportunity to visit with student-athletes in Luray and attend the Rotary Club of Amherst's 49th Annual Pancake Day. Further, despite being home in Virginia, the legislative work does not stop. I questioned Dr. Fauci regarding the origins of the COVID virus and NIH funding of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, as well as wrote to the Government Accountability Office asking for an update on their investigation into President Biden's unlawful freezing of appropriated funds for border wall construction. It was a productive week, and I always appreciate the opportunity to serve on your behalf.

Mask Mandate:

With 4,648,449 Virginians having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, which accounts for [54.5%](#) of the Commonwealth's population, it is time to fully reopen our economy, get folks back to work, kids back in the classroom, and reclaim the freedoms that have been impacted over the past year. While I am thankful that the Governor lifted most COVID-related restrictions [this week](#), there are still conflicting state orders that leave employers and employees in limbo. Earlier this year, Virginia's Health and Safety Codes Board issued permanent workplace safety standards. The standards set requirements for companies related to COVID-19 include cleaning, environmental changes, training, mask wearing, testing,

isolation, return to work, and reporting requirements. In order to remove or revise these requirements, the Health and Safety Codes Board must meet, but it can only do so following the lifting of the Governor's COVID-19 state of emergency declaration, which does not expire until [June 30](#). Therefore, despite lifting the mask mandate, any business that allows its employees to work without masks while in close contact with others will be in violation of the Board's standards. Thus, I call on the Governor to rescind the Commonwealth's emergency declaration to ensure no business or employee faces repercussions for not wearing a mask.

COVID-19 Origins:

For the past year, Dr. Fauci and the experts have rejected the idea that COVID-19 was leaked from a Wuhan Lab, but now the medical community is backtracking. In a recent interview, Dr. Fauci, when asked about whether the virus originated naturally, [said](#), "I am not convinced about that. I think we should continue to investigate what went on in China until we continue to find out to the best of our ability what happened." Further, Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra [said](#), "we have to understand how COVID-19 surfaced, we have to understand how it spread so we can try to make sure we are prepared for next time" and "[a] COVID origins study must be launched...to fully assess the source of the virus and the early days of the outbreak." This comes after [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported that three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 around November 2019 and had to be hospitalized. Time and again we have learned that the Chinese government downplayed the pandemic threat for several critical weeks and have covered up vital information. That is why I joined my colleagues in writing to the Speaker urging her to direct the appropriate committee chairs to immediately join Republican calls to hold the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) accountable for its role in causing the global COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally this week, Dr. Fauci [confirmed](#) to me in an Appropriations Subcommittee hearing that the National Institutes of Health earmarked \$600,000 for the Wuhan Institute of Virology over a five-year period to study whether bat coronaviruses could be transmitted to humans. This revelation makes clear that the United States must be overly cautious when determining when and if to send research dollars overseas.



Biden's Budget:

On a Friday, President Biden released his budget for Fiscal Year 2022. This \$6 trillion proposal is a roadmap of where he wants to take the country, but sadly, it leads right off a fiscal cliff. This socialist nightmare will explode the deficit and lead to skyrocketing inflation rates, while harming our families and our small businesses in the process. The plan shows a lack of respect for the American people and would take money out of the pockets of working-class folks through tax hikes and a higher cost of living. In [2022](#) alone, "Biden's budget projects a \$1.8 trillion deficit, half of the record \$3.6 trillion deficit expected for this year. In the following years, that would fall to a range of \$1.3 to \$1.6 trillion, higher than all but a few years following the Great Recession." Further, "By 2030, the cost of servicing the debt alone would become the largest contributor to the deficit, growing to \$914 billion by 2031 -- [11.1](#) percent of total spending and 58 percent of the total deficit." To make matters worse, there is no mention of the word 'border' in the proposal despite the worsening immigration crisis, and it fails to include Hyde protections that prevent taxpayer funds from being used to pay for abortions. The plan is

a slap in the face to our economic recovery from COVID, and American families will pay the price. Our country cannot afford this Administration's runaway spending.

Building the Wall:

Early in the Biden Administration, one of the key acts that fueled the current border crisis was the unlawful suspension of congressionally appropriated funds to finish the border wall. This violation of the Impoundment Control Act has effectively led to an open border. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified before the House Budget Committee that they began looking into the President's decision to freeze funding of the border wall in January, and now their report and findings from the investigation are long overdue.

I had joined more than 100 of my colleagues in requesting a legal opinion from the GAO by March 2021, a similar time frame for past GAO opinions. As we head into June, Congress has still not received detailed information nor a specified timeline for when the GAO will release its opinion. This delay is concerning especially considering the GAO issued a legal opinion on a similar executive use of congressionally appropriated funds during the Trump Administration within a matter of two months. That is why this week members of the Budget Committee and I wrote to Comptroller General Dodaro demanding answers. President Biden must uphold the Rule of Law, secure the border, and release congressionally appropriated funds for the wall. To read the full letter, click [here](#).



Luray Bulldogs:

This week, I continued to make my rounds throughout the District to recognize the accomplishments of our region's high school student-athletes. On Monday, I visited with the Luray High School Lady Bulldogs to present them with a copy of the Congressional Record honoring their Class 2 state championship victory. This win capped off a perfect season for the Bulldogs, and I offer my congratulations to the players, coaches, and staff. Hard work truly does

pay off.



Rotary Club of Amherst:

Rotary International describes itself as a global network of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in their communities, and in themselves. I recently enjoyed the opportunity to join the Rotary Club of Amherst for the organization's 49th Annual Pancake Day. Portions of the money raised from this event will be donated to local charities, as well as used to fund scholarships for graduating high school seniors throughout Amherst County. I commend the Rotary Club of Amherst for their continued efforts to help our community.





Memorial Day:

The word hero often gets misused, but when it comes to those who have given their lives in service to our Nation, there is no other word that more accurately describes the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Tomorrow, as we observe Memorial Day, we remember the patriots who have laid down their lives while wearing our Nation's uniform in defense of the American Ideal. Every Memorial Day, I remember the words President Lincoln spoke during the Gettysburg Address:

"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

May God continue to bless our Nation and produce those willing to stand in the gap and sacrifice for those they never met but are bound to through a shared American heritage all in the name of freedom.



COVID-19 Update:

As of May 30, 2021, Virginia has had 675,392 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 11,173. Further, according to the VDH's COVID-19 vaccine data dashboard, as of May 30th, 4,648,449 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and 3,753,299 people are fully vaccinated.



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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Clure". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Ben" and "Clure" being capitalized and prominent.

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