

March 8, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you and your administration draft your budget for fiscal year 2020, I wish to highlight specific budget values and priorities that I believe will benefit the people of the great state of West Virginia and this nation. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I continue to be an advocate for smart spending. I believe we need to do more to take our out-of-control spending and I remain concerned about our ballooning national debt, but those should not come at the expense of the type of investments that help our country grow and succeed.

Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

As you know, my state is ground zero in the opioid epidemic with an overdose rate of 57.8 per 100,000, the highest in the nation by a large margin. While we have invested significant resources in addressing this national epidemic, we have not done enough to target those resources to the places that need it the most. That is why I not only urge you to include increased funding for all federal programs like the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program, and the Drug Free Communities Program that are effectively helping states and communities address the opioid epidemic, I encourage you to review and revise the funding formulas to ensure that the communities with the highest rates of death due to drug overdose receive the federal support they need to succeed.

Federal agencies also need to take administrative actions to address this crisis. In particular, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should require mandatory prescriber education on the dangers of opioid misuse and addiction and review the efficacy of labeling opioids for long-term chronic pain relief. Sufficient funding for agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration is also vital because each has a critical role to play in addressing this epidemic and saving lives. I would also request additional funding for treatment services funded through a one-cent-per-milligram stewardship fee on opioids. It is past time that we set realistic prices on these dangerous drugs that reflect their true cost to society.

Keeping Our Promises to Our Coal Miners

I truly appreciate your strong support for the people of my state, and particularly our coal miners. Unfortunately, despite the fact that our nation's coal miners have done the heavy lifting for our country, they have to constantly fight just to keep the health care and retirement benefits they earned over lifetimes of back-breaking work. I urge you to include an extension of the coal excise tax for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund, the addition of orphan miners from 2018 bankruptcies into the Coal Act, and a permanent fix to ensure the solvency of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) 1974 Pension Plan in your budget proposal.

As you well know, coal miners from my state have kept the lights on for generations and their safety should be one of our top priorities. That is why I urge you to support strong funding for mine safety. I also encourage you to support the work of the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation (OSMRE) within DOI that manages the critically important Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund which assists uncertified states with remaining legacy abandoned mine lands in need of reclamation. OSMRE also oversees the Power Plus Program which helps to provide economic revitalization for states like mine that are directly impacted by the downturn of the coal industry.

Balancing Energy Production and Environmental Stewardship

As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and as a Senator from one of the leading energy-producing states in the nation, I know how vital it is to support federal funding for programs within the Department of Energy. Achieving true energy independence requires a comprehensive plan that utilizes all of our domestic resources – coal, natural gas, biomass, nuclear, renewables, storage, and energy efficiency – and ensures U.S. leadership in energy technology. We need to give the Department the resources and tools it needs to get across the finish line on carbon capture utilization and sequestration (CCUS) as well as advanced the ball significantly on advanced nuclear technologies, energy storage, energy efficiency and renewables like hydro, solar and wind. In particular, the importance of commercializing and further deploying CCUS technology in the electric and manufacturing sectors is internationally recognized because it is the critical technology for reducing carbon emissions in a world that will continue to rely on fossil fuels. The U.S. should be leading the competition in this critical technology race. That is why I encourage you to support the work of the Office of Fossil Energy and the National Energy Technology Laboratory, as well as the Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy (ARPA-E).

I am also excited about the Appalachian Storage Hub's potential to create jobs and make us a leader in energy storage and manufacturing, which is why I encourage you to include strong support for research, development and innovation in the energy sector through the Department's Loan Program office. In particular, the office's Title XVII Innovative Technology Loan Guarantee Program encourages our energy sector to push toward the future. I hope you will follow our lead in Congress and request robust funding for this initiative.

West Virginians, like all Americans, want clean air to breath and clean water to drink. We must continue to support federal environmental partnerships that protect the air from unsafe toxins and environmental degradation. It is also important to keep investing in programs such as state revolving funds, stewardship grants, and environmental programs administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to safeguard our drinking water.

In West Virginia, we also take immeasurable pride in our wild and wonderful outdoor heritage. We are home to some of the best whitewater rafting in the world on the New and Gauley River and breathtaking hiking views at Dolly Sods. As you know, Congress recently passed S. 47, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which will increase access to our public lands and protect the land itself for generations to come. The legislation permanently reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) after its expiration in September 2018. For the last 50 years, the LWCF has preserved public land and ensured access to outdoor recreation across the country and I urge you to provide robust funding that continues to allow LWCF to provide critical public access to the outdoors, while I join my colleagues in the bipartisan pursuit of permanent funding for this program.

In June 2016, severe flooding caused significant damage to infrastructure, homes, personal property and businesses throughout multiple counties in West Virginia, and 23 people tragically lost their lives. Later that year, I was proud to help lead the effort to authorize a study of the Kanawha River Basin in the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (P.L. 114-322) to determine the feasibility of implementing projects for flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, navigation, recreation, and other water resource related purposes in the hope that we can prevent another devastating flood like this. The State of West Virginia

has supplied a Letter of Intent to cover the local cost share of this project – \$1.5 million over three years. I encourage you to dedicate funding in your budget proposal for the initiation of new studies, one of which should be the Kanawha River Basin feasibility study.

Helping our Families, Friends, and Neighbors

We need to invest in our future and that starts by investing in our children. Every child in this country deserves the opportunity to learn and succeed, which is why I ask you to support federal programs like Head Start, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Child Care and Development Block Grant. We must also support our public schools and provide them with the resources they need so that every student can receive a quality education that puts them on a path for success. Providing funding for Title I and Career and Technical Education at the Department of Education is a necessary step in achieving this goal.

West Virginians understand the value of keeping our promises to those who have paved the way for us to succeed. To our seniors, Social Security and Medicare are not just government programs, they are promises earned through years of hard work and sacrifice. By protecting these programs while discussing responsible ways to get the federal deficit under control, we can keep our promise to our seniors in a fiscally responsible way. As a state with a large elderly population, my state's rural and elderly populations rely on the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for critical rural health programs like Community Health Centers and rural hospitals, as well as training for healthcare workers. I ask you to support these important programs. We must also maintain incentives to keep medical professionals in underserved and rural communities and support for important medical research that has the potential to save and improve lives.

We live in the greatest country on earth. No family should have to worry about being able to put food on the table. Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are very important to the people I represent. I encourage you to continue to support funding for these important programs so that no child in West Virginia goes hungry. I also encourage you to support housing assistance programs that are critical for so many West Virginians. In order to ensure West Virginians are able to better insulate themselves from high-energy costs, a problem that disproportionately affects low-income households, I hope that you will include adequate funding for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

Rebuilding Our Infrastructure

While we continue negotiations on a major infrastructure proposal that will invest in our roads, bridges, airports, pipelines, and broadband network, this budget proposal is an opportunity to make a significant down payment. I encourage you to support initiatives and programs that will help connect and open up rural states to the rest of the country. I ask that you support full funding for programs like the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grant Program, the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and the Essential Air Service Program, which are all crucial to assisting rural areas. Federal highway funding is important, but many rural areas also face additional challenges maintaining secondary roads that do not fall under the federal highway program. My state of West Virginia is already overburdened with the sixth largest highway system in the U.S. when it comes to the roads it needs to maintain, and despite significant state and local funding, our secondary roads continue to deteriorate. Prior to the creation of Highway Trust Fund, the federal government stepped in to help states that needed help maintaining their secondary roads. I would ask that you consider doing the same in your infrastructure proposal or FY20 budget request through the creation of a new initiative or by using existing sources of funding to dedicate to our rural secondary roads.

But in the 21st Century, transportation infrastructure is only one piece of the puzzle. Broadband connectivity is equally important to connecting Americans with economic opportunities and allowing them to compete in a global marketplace. I encourage you to not just continue our robust investments in rural

broadband loan and grant programs like the ReConnect and Community Connect Programs within the United States Department of Agriculture, we must review and revise the formulas to ensure that funding is actually making it to the places that need it the most. As you know, my little state is one of the most beautiful places in the world, but our rugged landscape and small population make broadband infrastructure far more expensive than in flatter areas. This poses a challenge for my state since many of these broadband programs are designed to go to places where their dollars can be stretched the furthest. I hope you will advocate for a terrain factor or high cost set aside within broadband funding so that West Virginia has a fair chance to compete for this desperately needed and finite federal support.

While strong funding for rural broadband is vital, we also need to be responsible in how we choose to disperse federal broadband funding in order to guarantee it is truly going to the places that need it the most. To do this, we need to have more accurate broadband coverage maps. Strong funding for map improvement initiatives at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will help to ensure the coverage data depicts the real-world experiences of all Americans. I am proud to help lead a bipartisan effort encouraging these agencies to establish a public feedback mechanism that allows consumers and states to participate in the mapping process and confirm the accuracy of these maps before final funding decisions are made. I encourage you to provide these agencies with the resources they need to be reliable federal partners in this effort.

Creating Jobs and Growing the Economy

We must also focus our priorities on ensuring that we are protecting and supporting American jobs, which is why it is critical that we fund agencies like the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA), which help support economic growth and development, particularly in rural America, through programs like the Assistance to Coal Communities (ACC) Initiative, which has had incredible success in my home state and others. Through initiatives like the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Grants, ARC and EDA are working every day to revitalize coal communities and help to diversify Appalachian economies, while the SBA helps communities across the country by helping to create jobs and economic resilience. Finally, while this funding is critical, it is also important to ensure that our tax incentives are geared toward creating jobs and spurring economic development in areas with the highest unemployment that have experienced a downturn as a result of a loss of industry, whether it is coal or manufacturing or other areas impacted by trade.

West Virginians have already lost enough of their jobs because of unfair and unjust trade policies, and I look forward to working with you to protect American jobs and put America first. That's why we must support the agencies responsible for enforcing our trade deals, such as Customs and Border Patrol and the Department of Commerce. I agree that we must reevaluate and renegotiate our unfair trade deals to ensure they are fair for our workers and businesses. Additionally, housing assistance programs provide critical support for many West Virginians. I encourage you to continue to fund these vital programs.

Safeguarding Our National Security and Honoring Our Veterans

The United States has never seen such a challenging and ever-evolving threat environment. We are in a period of strong economic growth, and this is the time to make long-term investments in innovation, readiness, and modernization in order to continue to have the strongest military in the world. I am particularly interested in ensuring our Reserve Components have the resources to recruit, retain, and adequately train their service members. Additionally, as the ranking member of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee on the Senate Armed Services Committee, it is my hope that we continue to make investments in cyber that will allow the military to protect and defend the homeland in the cyber domain. At the same time, I have long advocated for greater transparency within the Department of Defense's finances. While I applaud steps taken in the past several years, I will continue to push the Department to be more "audit ready."

I do not believe our national security is predicated on military-might alone. There is no question that a revisionist Russia and China have forced us into Great Powers competition and we must compete diplomatically. I am convinced that the best way to curtail defense spending is by investing in our Department of State so that their personnel can work with international partners to stop conflict before it begins. Democracy beats authoritarianism every time and our diplomats are best equipped to communicate that to our partners around the world.

Military service is a difficult, noble task, and we owe a great deal to all the patriotic American men, women, and families who have answered the highest call to service. We must uphold our end of the bargain. We must ensure that the VA MISSION Act is properly executed and expands the ability of the VA to fully meet the needs of Veterans and caregivers. An important step in that direction is significantly reducing the 49,000 hiring vacancies at the VA. High quality care starts with maintaining and equipping a workforce of exceptional doctors and nurses to treat Veterans in a timely manner. We must also prioritize the ongoing infrastructure needs of the VA, and that requires investing in maintenance and new development projects. Finally, we have to do everything in our power to make sure we solve the ongoing issue of Veteran suicides. Expanding on and improving existing programs to get the most at-risk Veterans the help, care, and purpose they need is necessary. I commend you on your executive action on ending Veteran suicide and encourage you to ensure those newly formed programs are fully resourced and researched.

A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out

My grandmother, Mama Kay, used to tell me that we should give people “a hand up, not a hand out.” In my opinion, these investments are the hand up this country needs to succeed. I appreciate your consideration of my budget priorities, which I believe are in the best interest of my state and our country. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to create a budget that is bipartisan and fiscally responsible.

Warm regards,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator