

February 22, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Mr. President:

As you and your administration draft your inaugural budget for fiscal year 2018, 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. While I firmly believe that the national debt is one of the greatest threats facing this nation, I also believe that we must continue to invest in the values and principles that make this nation the greatest country on earth: taking care of our children and helping those in need; strengthening our economy and creating jobs; keeping our promises to seniors and veterans; preserving national security; and investing in infrastructure and energy independence.

Caring for our Children and Helping those in Need

Our children are our greatest treasure and our hope for the future. We must ensure that every child has access to the five promises: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to serve. That is why we must support federal programs like Head Start, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Child Care and Development Block Grant. These programs and others that support local public schools provide critical aid to our most vulnerable children and give every child in our country the opportunity to learn a livable skill set and thrive as adults. When we invest in our children, we invest in our future.

West Virginia, like much of rural America, has been devastated by the opioid epidemic. In 2015, West Virginia had the highest per-capita rate of deaths – 600 people in that year alone – due to an opioid overdose. That is why I have led the fight in the Senate to increase federal support for prevention and treatment services with a one-cent-per-milligram stewardship fee on opioids, and I would welcome your support in that effort. This would provide critical funding for treatment centers we so desperately need. The Centers for Disease Control, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Food and Drug Administration each have a critical role to play in addressing this epidemic and saving lives, and I urge you to give them the resources they need to help end this deadly epidemic.

Rural communities also have unique healthcare and education needs that must be addressed if we are going to attract new economic opportunities that create good paying jobs. I have worked consistently to support federal programs like Head Start, Title I, and Career and Technical

Education at the Department of Education to ensure that West Virginia's education system has the resources that they need to train the workers of tomorrow. I have also supported the work of the Department of Health and Human Services, which provides not only funding for critical healthcare services, including care at rural hospitals, but also training for healthcare providers, 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.

There is no worse feeling than not being able to provide for your family. Fifteen percent of West Virginia households have struggled to put food on their table. Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and others are very important to the people I represent. As an example, WIC serves nearly half of all infants and one-quarter of all young children in my home state. Our food banks rely on federal support to provide meals to our friends and neighbors in need. In fact, in 2016, Mountaineer Food Bank and Facing Hunger Food Bank distributed over 16.4 million meals feeding over 304,000 hungry people in West Virginia.

Economy and Jobs

First and foremost on the minds of many West Virginians is the strength of our economy and the freedom for able-bodied men and women to find work. We're not asking government to be our provider; we want government to be our partner. Federal programs such as the Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Agency, and the Small Business Administration are instrumental in supporting job creation and building economic resilience in states where resources are scarce. I urge you to continue to fund these critical programs.

As our small businesses and corporations compete in the global economy we must focus our budget priorities on protecting American jobs and winning the jobs war. It is imperative that we support the agencies responsible for enforcing our trade deals, such as Customs and Border Patrol and the Department of Commerce. Furthermore, I agree that we must reevaluate and renegotiate our unfair trade deals to ensure they are fair for our workers and businesses. 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.

Keeping Our Promises to Seniors and Veterans

Achieving a brighter future for our nation depends on us keeping our promises to our seniors and veterans. To our seniors, Social Security and Medicare are not just government programs, they are promises earned through years of hard work and sacrifice. I believe that we must keep our promises to seniors by protecting Medicare and Social Security as we discuss responsible ways to get the federal deficit under control.

The sacrifices and patriotism of our veterans knows no bounds. They have answered the call of this nation again and again, and we must uphold our end of the bargain. Veterans deserve access to drug rehabilitation facilities and alternative treatments. Veterans deserve access to vocational rehabilitation programs such as the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program and the Veteran Success on Campus program. Veterans deserve access to the best care that this

country can provide, wherever they reside, and initiatives like the 3R program (Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentives) play a major role in making that a reality in a rural state like West Virginia.

National Security

As a member of the Intelligence Committee, I am aware of the many, diverse threats facing our country today. From near-peer competitors, to rogue states armed with ballistic missiles, to transnational terrorists, and increased vulnerability to cyber-attacks, America must be ready to confront any and all threats to our way of life and core values. West Virginia is already home to first class training facilities, and we are ready and willing to offer additional support to our national security in a variety of cost effective, efficient ways. The Mountain State is blessed with incredible resources and talent, and I encourage you to capitalize on our proximity to Washington D.C. by further developing transportation nodes, communications architecture, alternative headquarters and command and control nodes, and new training opportunities for our national security personnel serving at all levels and capacities.

I commend your initiative to rebuild our nation's military, and I am committed to working with you to accomplish this goal in a fiscally responsible manner. The readiness of our national defense is extremely low and our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines are paying the price and risking their lives by operating degraded weapons systems. Our troops deserve the best there is to offer, and we must better prepare our brave men and women in uniform to win these difficult fights both on the battlefield and in cyberspace. As a former Governor, I know first-hand what a critical role the National Guard plays in protecting this great country and helping its people respond to disasters. When considering your budget, I encourage you to make investments in this force that have so bravely served us both domestically and abroad.

Infrastructure and Energy Independence

Rebuilding America is just common sense. By choosing to focus on our needs here at home – on roads, bridges, airports, pipelines and broadband in every state – we will not only create jobs, but we will strengthen the very economic foundation of this nation that our people and our businesses rely on to thrive. I support the Department of Transportation's work to invest in our surface transportation, airports, and air service through programs such as the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects and the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Essential Air Service (EAS) programs.

Moreover, I am committed to working with you, my colleagues in Congress, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on the deployment of broadband access in rural areas across this country. I am proud to help lead the effort in the Senate calling on the FCC to move on items such as Phase II of the Mobility Fund, but there is no silver bullet. Federal broadband policies have failed states like West Virginia because voices from rural America have not been at the table. That's why I introduced *The Rural Telecommunications and Broadband Service Act* to bring rural voices to the table and ensure that the FCC and Congress live up to the promise of universal service and help define what that means in today's 21st century economy.

As a Senator from a true energy state – the second largest coal producing state and a net exporter of electricity – I am very proud of the critical role West Virginians play in powering our nation, but achieving true energy independence requires a comprehensive plan that utilizes all of our domestic resources – coal, natural gas, biomass, nuclear, wind, hydro and solar. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts that coal will continue to be a significant part of our energy mix for decades to come. Whether it is ensuring regulations are reasonable or securing robust investment in research and development for advanced coal technologies, I applaud your commitment to ensuring coal remains a robust part of our energy mix and encourage you to continue to safeguard these vital efforts. For example, Federal agencies such as the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Fossil Energy and Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy are important partners in this endeavor and I request your strong support for important federal investments such as the National Energy Technology Lab and the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Every West Virginian wants clean air and clean water, and I am committed to ensuring both. Federal environmental partnerships are critical to ensuring that West Virginians are protected from unsafe toxins and environmental degradation. State revolving funds, stewardship grants and environmental programs administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in partnership with states and local communities are vital tools in guarding our citizens’ drinking water. I was pleased to secure Secretary Pruitt’s commitment to supporting these programs during our meeting earlier this year, and I hope we can work together to ensure that the EPA has the funding they need to execute this important mission.

In closing, I appreciate your consideration of my budget priorities. West Virginians and all Americans are demanding that we get our financial house in order, but we must confront our fiscal situation by clearly aligning our priorities with our core values as Americans. We cannot throw the baby out with the bathwater. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to put partisanship aside and set our nation on a new course for fiscal responsibility.

With Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III", is written over a printed name and title. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator