S. HRG. 117–489

THE AMERICAN JOBS PLAN: INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND INVESTING IN OUR NATION'S FUTURE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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THE AMERICAN JOBS PLAN: INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND INVESTING IN OUR NATION'S FUTURE

TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met at 10:02 a.m. in room SD–106, Dirksen Office Building, Hon. Patrick Leahy (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Leahy, Feinstein, Reed, Tester, Shaheen, Merkley, Coons, Schatz, Baldwin, Murphy, Manchin, Van Hollen, Heinrich, Shelby, Collins, Murkowski, Blunt, Hoeven, Kennedy, Hyde-Smith, and Braun.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

Chairman LEAHY. I should turn my microphone on. It works better, I am told.

Some of us will be coming in and out. Some members, myself included, also serve on the Judiciary Committee, which is having a significant hearing on Voting Rights Act. I was just there and spoke.

I thank everybody for coming here to what's the first hearing of the Full Senate Appropriations Committee for the 117th Congress. I think it's very appropriate we're having the hearing on infrastructure.

I also thank all of the members, both Republicans and Democrats, who are here because these are issues that affect all of us. There is no other committee within the Senate whose jurisdiction touches every aspect of our government and American lives. The same can be said of our infrastructure. That's why Senator Shelby and I have worked so closely together over the years.

Now there were days when we'd say infrastructure meant only bridges or highways, roads and rail. But to narrow our view of infrastructure to just this is not only prosaic, it reflects a woeful ignorance of the real needs facing our communities, our cities, our Nation at large.

The American Jobs Plan is a sweeping proposal. It's going to inject sorely needed resources into our transit systems, build affordable housing long needed in communities across every part of our country. It's going to address the disparity in reliable broadband access that currently only further divides rural and urban America. As one who lives in rural America and knows what that's like, I sympathize.

It will invest our people in research and development. It will help the development, implementation in climate-friendly technologies. It will begin to chip away at the long-ignored climate issues, some of the greatest universal challenges of our time. You can no longer ignore the reality of climate change. Now we have an opportunity to take a step to mitigate our carbon footprint and to make our infrastructure more resilient to the challenges ahead.

It's not a question of whether or not we should take this opportunity. It's necessary to our future that we do.

In rural America—and everybody here represents rural areas also in their States, I certainly do in the State of Vermont—97 percent of the Nation geographically is in rural America, but it's only 23 percent of the population. Rural America has been left behind for too long.

In Vermont, 20 percent of homes lack adequate access to quality high-speed broadband. The race for 5G services across the country ignores the fact that in my State of Vermont, plenty cannot even get access to 4G services. I suspect that is the same in rural areas of every State represented here.

But in the pandemic, it has meant the difference between access to education for students or not. I think of the families shivering in their cars parked somewhere near where they could get broadband for their children to get their education.

It has meant the difference between receiving potentially life-changing telehealth services or not, facing unnecessary deaths. It has meant the differences between simple connections with family and friends or not.

Building a broadband access is not just simply laying fiber and walking away. With it, schools, hospitals, office buildings, homes must have the necessary framework in place to use those services. It is all connected, not just by roads and bridges.

I have heard the naysayers. Those who say we spent too much too quickly in the face of the COVID–19 pandemic. Those who say these investments are for States to make, not the Federal Government, those who say now is just not the time. To those people I say if this is not the time, when is? When is? And if not us, then who?

The climate crisis is here. We have to step up. Our economy was necessarily curbed over the last year to stop the spread of the deadly pandemic. There is a need for not just cash infusions to Americans, but of jobs, good-paying jobs to help rebuild America. Not to where we were, but to where we have to be in this next generation if we want to compete on the international stage.

There is no more pivotal time than now. America can't be left behind. The world is in an economic race. We are losing to China. Beijing is investing heavily in new roads, railways, water infrastructure. They are investing in the economy, the transportation of tomorrow, but so should we. Our country only invests about 2.3 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) on our infrastructure. That is a 60-year low from where those investments peaked in the '50s.

Other industrialized countries, like our European allies, more than doubled the United States' investment in this sphere. We cannot continue our position as a leader of the global stage by thinking small.

Now this is the Senate Appropriations Committee. I know all of you. You are all friends and I think the world of you. We work annually every single year to enact meaningful appropriations bills that address the needs of our time, but today the need outweighs the resources our annual process can provide.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity, a once-in-a-generation opportunity to not just put a patch on the problem but to make an aggressive and substantial investment demanded by the moment.

This is a popular initiative, and why shouldn't it be? The American Jobs Plan stands to significantly improve the quality of life here in America in urban and rural areas alike. We are sent here to advocate for our constituents. The American Jobs Plan entrusts many of those needs. It is long overdue.

Let us set aside partisan rancor. Let us work together, as this committee has so many times over our history, and agree it is a bold step we need at this time in history.

I yield to my friend, the Vice Chairman, Senator Shelby.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR RICHARD C. SHELBY

Senator SHELBY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to first welcome our witnesses to the committee today and since this is our first full committee hearing under the new Democratic Majority, Mr. Chairman, I want to recognize and congratulate you on your new role as chairman of the committee and hope that we can continue to work together in a bipartisan fashion because that's the only way we're going to really move things for the American people.

I also want to commend you for calling today's hearing. I believe it's an important step toward reasserting the Appropriations Committee's jurisdiction over Federal spending.

President Biden's Emergency COVID Relief Bill contained nearly half a trillion dollars in appropriations for discretionary accounts. Despite this, the Appropriations Committee was sidelined by the process used to pass that legislation.

I hope we don't go down that road again, especially with something as important as infrastructure.

Doing this work at the Appropriations Committee's level is not just about protecting the committee's jurisdiction here, it's about protecting also the American taxpayers.

The Appropriations Committee has expertise other committees lack when it comes to oversight of funding. This is especially important given the scale and the scope of the package the President has proposed.

Mr. Chairman, you and I have shown that when given a chance, appropriators can strike deals that enjoy broad bipartisan support, and as a general matter, I believe there is broad bipartisan agreement on the need for investment in our Nation's crumbling infrastructure. But the breadth of that support, I think, depends on how broadly the term "infrastructure" is defined.

For me, that is a central question for today's hearing. What kind of investments can we agree fall under the category of infrastructure? I believe most people associate the term with roads, with bridges, airports, transportation systems, water systems, sewage systems, and the like.

The Administration's proposal, on the other hand, is so broad and ambiguous in the areas that it seems there is little, if anything, that they do not consider or call infrastructure.

The American Jobs Plan proposes to be all things to all people I guess for all time. It's largely, I think, an effort to check items off the longstanding liberal wish under the guise of infrastructure. Non-germane items aside, I also have concerns about the overall approach in the President's plan for more traditional types of infrastructure. The plan appears to be focused on making new investments in unproven programs rather than expanding investments in proven infrastructure programs.

It all suggests, I think, an approach that will grow government for the long term instead of harnessing the power of the private sector partnerships that I believe are good for American business, taxpayers, and for infrastructure in this country.

Not to mention, it also proposes paying for everything with a massive tax increase. Yes, a massive tax increase. In light of this proposed tax hike, it's puzzling that the Administration in its press release announcing the proposal claimed it will "position the United States to out-compete China." Wow! That's all the more curious considering the Administration's recently proposed slashing the defense budget of all things, as well.

Self-inflicted wounds in the American economy and military readiness are not an effective recipe for out-competing China, in my judgment.

I hope our witnesses today can provide the committee more details than the Administration's press release included. It's time, I believe, to move past slogans, platitudes, to the particulars, and this is why this hearing is important today.

I hope they will tell us today, our witnesses, that is, about their ability to execute the projects of this scale in addition to their regular responsibilities. I'm interested in hearing about the expansion of the Federal bureaucracy that will be required to execute such huge sums and the long-term funding that will be necessary to sustain it.

I'm also interested, Mr. Chairman, in learning about any alternatives to the proposed tax increases to finance those projects in a more efficient manner.

Finally, I believe we must have an understanding of the accountability mechanisms that are planned to ensure taxpayers' hard-earned dollars are not wasted. This is a very important discussion that you've put together today, and I want to thank you again for ensuring that the Appropriations Committee has a voice in this debate.

I think it's a golden opportunity to achieve the unity the President has promised to deliver. I hope we can come together to make the types of investments that we can agree on are necessary to improving our Nation's infrastructure and boost the American economy for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, thank you. Before I introduce the witnesses, I will mention, while I have the members' attention for a moment, this hearing is a hybrid hearing, meaning we have some members attending virtually, some in person. I thank the witnesses for being here in person.

When we get to the question portion of the hearing, we will have 5-minute question rounds. I know there are a number of committee meetings going on. Members will be called on in the order of their seniority in the full committee. If Senators are unavailable at the time they are called on, I will move on to the next person and then if they missed their turn, when they come back, we will just go back in order. I ask the Senators to mute themselves when not speaking. Those joining virtually, I would ask you to not log out of the meeting before asking your questions. Just turn off your cameras if you need to step away.

We are going to have witnesses speak, each for 5 minutes. The Secretary of the Department of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, then Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Michael Regan, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge.

I see the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island here and when you have someone from your State you know well, let me yield to you, Senator Reed, for her introduction.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted to be able to introduce Secretary Gina Raimondo. We're fortunate to have her. I've been privileged to know Secretary Raimondo since she was 2 months old. We were neighbors together, our families, in Rhode Island, and, indeed, many years apart, Secretary Raimondo and I went to the same high school, LaSalle Academy in Providence, but there our paths departed.

Secretary Raimondo was accepted in every school I was rejected from, Harvard College, Oxford University as Rhodes Scholar, and Yale Law School. That might account for her success as Governor. She was an extraordinary leader when the COVID crisis erupted. She led the State with great decisiveness, and then she's been a great asset to our economic activities in the State, dramatically enhancing our economy through innovation, wise investment, and a dynamic partnership with business. We're indeed lucky to have her. Welcome, Madam Secretary.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you, Senator Reed.

And let us start with Secretary Buttigieg. Mr. Secretary, please go ahead.

I apologize for the distance in here. Usually even in a committee this size, we are a little bit closer together. This is a sign of the times and I am hoping before too long that will change.

Please go ahead, Mr. Secretary.

STATEMENT OF HON. PETE BUTTIGIEG, SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Chairman LEAHY. Is your microphone on?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. How about now? All right. Sorry about that, Chairman.

Thank you. Thank you to Vice Chairman Shelby. Thanks to all of the members of the committee for inviting us to testify today.

We're gathering in a moment in which our infrastructure situation calls both for urgent action and for long-term strategic vision. As we speak, a climate crisis is already hurting Americans, and it will continue to get far worse if we don't act.

And in this moment, we need to add back millions of jobs to fully recover from the pandemic, even as we build a stronger foundation for the economic future.

It's in this context that we see the American Jobs Plan as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to meet this consequential moment and to win the future for the country that we all serve.

This plan would improve more than 20,000 miles of roads and 10,000 bridges. It will strengthen aviation, ports, and waterways. It will address critical backlogs in rail and expand world-class passenger rail services, including high-speed rail.

It has dedicated funds for projects that will have significant benefit to the regional and national economy but are too large or complex for existing funding programs.

The American Jobs Plan will fix and modernize our transportation system so that our economy and our country can thrive. That means finally addressing the inequities of past transportation choices and it means increasing access and equity in projects going forward and that means also tackling the climate crisis.

In the United States, the transportation sector is the economy's single biggest contributor to greenhouse gases, which means it can and must be a big part of the solution to climate change.

The American Jobs Plan will move us away from our over-reliance on fossil fuels and toward net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It will spark an electric vehicle revolution, building a network of 500,000 electric vehicle chargers across the country in urban and rural areas, and provide rebates to make electric vehicles affordable for more Americans.

The plan will double Federal funding for public transit, making it a more reliable and accessible option to more people, and by investing billions to make travel safer for all Americans, whether they move by car, public transit, foot, bike, wheelchair, or any other means, it will reduce congestion on the road and pollution in the air.

We draw inspiration from the New Deal's infrastructure projects and President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System, but we cannot afford to rely on the original version of the roads, bridges, and airports they built all those years ago.

The need for new investment is impossible to ignore. We see it in the sections of California's Highway 1 that fell into the ocean, in the Gulf Coast flooding that halted rail service after Hurricane Harvey, and in the loss of subway service for millions of New Yorkers after Hurricane Sandy.

We see it in the storms on our coasts, the floods in the Midwest, the wildfires in California, and the deadly snowstorm in Texas. We must adapt.

Our proposed resilience investments would support projects across America that reinforce, upgrade, or realign existing transportation infrastructure to better withstand extreme weather events and other effects of climate change.

I heard it said that the American Jobs Plan should be about roads and bridges but should not address climate change. I would compare that to drawing up plans for a new restaurant with no consideration for health, safety, or cleanliness.

The truth is that every infrastructure decision is already inevitably a climate decision, as well. Our choices on roads, bridges, and other infrastructure must recognize and reduce the very real threat that climate change poses to American lives and livelihoods.

This is also our opportunity to deliver equity where it has been denied in the past, which is why at least 40 percent of the benefits of the plan's climate investments will flow to overburdened and underserved communities who often bear a disproportionate burden of transportation pollution, and, yes, this is fundamentally an investment in our economy.

The time has come to break the old false framework of climate versus jobs. After all, American workers are going to do the work, rebuilding roads, laying new cables and pipes, retrofitting buildings, installing electric vehicle chargers, and manufacturing the vehicles that will use those electric chargers.

This is America's biggest jobs investment since World War II, supporting millions of new prevailing wage jobs, the majority of which will be available to people without a college degree.

I look forward to working with members of the committee to make that possible.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear and will be happy to answer your questions.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. PETE BUTTIGIEG

Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

We are gathering at a moment in which our infrastructure situation calls both for urgent action and a long-term, strategic vision. As we speak, a climate crisis is already hurting Americans, and it will continue to get far worse if we don't act. And in this moment, we need to add back millions of jobs to fully recover from the pandemic, even as we build a stronger foundation for the economic future.

It is in this context that we see the American Jobs Plan as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to meet this consequential moment and win the future for the country we all serve.

The plan will improve more than 20,000 miles of roads and 10,000 bridges. It will strengthen aviation, ports, and waterways. It will address critical backlogs in rail and expand world-class passenger rail services, including high-speed rail. It has dedicated funds for projects that will have significant benefits to the regional or national economy but are too large or complex for existing funding programs.

The American Jobs Plan will fix and modernize our transportation system so that our economy-and our country-can thrive. That means finally addressing the inequities of our past transportation, and by increasing access and equity in projects going forward. And that means tackling the climate crisis.

In the United States, the transportation sector is the economy's single biggest contributor to greenhouse gases—which means it can and must be a big part of the solution to climate change. The American Jobs Plan will move us away from our overreliance on fossil fuels and towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It will spark an electric vehicle revolution, building a network of 500,000 electric vehicle chargers across the country-in urban and rural areas-and providing rebates to make electric vehicles affordable for more Americans.

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We draw inspiration from the New Deal's infrastructure projects and President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System, but we cannot afford to rely on the original version of the roads, bridges, and airports they built all those years ago. The need for new investment is impossible to ignore. We see it in the sections of California's Highway 1 that fell into the ocean; in the Gulf Coast flooding that halted rail service after Hurricane Harvey; and in the loss of subway service for millions of New Yorkers after Hurricane Sandy. We see it in the storms on our coasts, the floods in the Midwest, the wildfires in California and the deadly snowstorm in Texas. We must adapt. Our proposed resilience investments would support projects across America that reinforce, upgrade or realign existing transportation infrastructure to better withstand extreme weather events and other effects of climate change.

I have heard it said that the American Jobs Plan should be about roads and bridges but should not address climate change. I would compare that to drawing up plans for a new restaurant with no consideration for health, safety, or cleanliness. The truth is that every infrastructure decision is already, inevitably a climate decision as well. Our choices on roads, bridges, and other infrastructure must recognize and reduce the very real threat that climate change poses to American lives and livelihoods.

This is also our opportunity to deliver equity where it has been denied in the past, which is why at least 40% of the benefits of the plan's climate investments will flow to overburdened and underserved communities, who often bear a disproportionate burden of transportation pollution.

And yes, this is fundamentally an investment in our economy. The time has come to break the old, false framework of "climate versus jobs."

After all, American workers are going to do the work rebuilding roads, laying new cables and pipes, retrofitting buildings, installing electric vehicle chargers, and manufacturing the vehicles that will use those electric chargers.

In fact, this is the biggest American jobs investment since World War II. It will support millions of new, prevailing wage jobs, the majority of which will be available to people without a college degree.

The American Jobs Plan is a chance to empower America's workers, secure our climate, and restore America's leadership position in an increasingly competitive world. It's our chance to build a future where transportation inspires dreams and not dread, a source of opportunity rather than a constraint on the budgets and livelihoods of American workers and families.

American livelihoods rise or fall based on infrastructure choices that reverberate for decades. This plan is how the generations now in charge can make good on our responsibility to keep the American dream alive for the generation now coming of age and those to follow.

I look forward to working with members of the Committee to make that possible. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today. I will be happy to answer your questions.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

And next we will hear from the Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Michael Regan.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL S. REGAN, ADMINISTRATOR, U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. REGAN. Thank you, Chairman Leahy, and Vice Chairman Shelby, and members of the committee.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the American Jobs Plan. This plan recognizes that now is the time for a bold, much-needed investment in America, to put millions of people back to work, and lay the foundation for economic growth by investing in infrastructure that could benefit all communities, leaving no one behind.

Infrastructure in the 21st Century extends far beyond roads and bridges. It means investing in our electrical grid, in building a more resilient transmission. It means revitalizing digital infrastructure to expand access to reliable high-speed broadband Internet in every pocket of this country, and it also means investing in our drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, cleaning up our restored land, and investing in programs that reduce pollution for our children.

Ensuring access to clean and safe water for all Americans impacts our Nation's climate resilience and is integral to advancing environmental justice and equity.

At EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), we've seen that investing in water infrastructure is a win-win for public health and for economic development. For example, EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Loan Program has helped finance over $19 billion in water infrastructure, creating over 47,000 jobs nationwide.

The American Jobs Plan would build on these successes by proposing $111 billion to invest in state-of-the-art water infrastructure that's more resilient to cyber attacks as well as climate change impacts and to remove 100 percent of the Nation's lead pipes in service lines and strengthen our water workforce, our pipefitters, our contractors, electricians, who are critical to safeguarding the health of our communities and getting clean water to every tap in America.

The plan would invest $56 billion in grants and low-cost flexible loans to States, to Tribes, to territories and disadvantaged communities all across this country to upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new emerging contaminants, and support clean water infrastructure across rural America.

The American Jobs Plan also provides $10 billion in funding to monitor and remediate PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in drinking water and to invest in rural small water systems and household well and wastewater systems, including drainage fields. In total, these investments will create millions of good-paying jobs, including union jobs.

When I was a child growing up in rural eastern North Carolina, I had to use an inhaler, an experience too familiar to too many children in this country. The American Jobs Plan proposes to electrify at least 20 percent of our yellow school bus fleet through a new Clean Buses for Kids Program at EPA to protect kids on their way to and from school.

We know this type of investment works. Since 2008, Congress has provided funding through EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act for more than 28,000 school bus upgrades, including more than 4,000 school bus replacements. The Clean Buses for Kids Program would build on the lessons learned from the DERA Program and leave an existing impact.

These investments will also boost market demand to create jobs, build on our infrastructure, and support U.S. manufacturing. In the 40 years since CERCLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act) was signed into law, we have made significant progress in cleaning up our restored lands, but the work is far from over.

The American Jobs Plan proposes a $5 billion investment in the remediation and redevelopment of Brownfields and Super Fund sites as well as related economic and workforce development programs.

Cleaning up contaminated sites and returning them back to productive use can be an engine for economic development across this country. Since Congress started the Brownfields Program, Federal investments have leveraged $34.6 billion supporting more than 176,000 jobs and cleaned up or made thousands of properties ready for reuse.

Chairman and members of this committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the American Jobs Plan with you. Together, we will help ensure that EPA can meet the inter-connected health and environmental crisis we face, lift up communities who have long been left behind, and demonstrate responsibly that environmental protection and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive but actually go hand in hand.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL S. REGAN

Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby and members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the bold vision laid out in the American Jobs Plan. This plan is a transformational investment that puts working people first and will help ensure we reduce pollution and help create good quality jobs.

THE AMERICAN JOBS PLAN

In March, President Biden released the American Jobs Plan. This plan recognizes that now is the time for a bold, once-in-a-generation investment in America to put millions of people to work and lay the foundation for economic growth for decades to come by investing in infrastructure.

Infrastructure in the 21st century extends far beyond just roads and bridges. It means investing in our electrical grid and building more resilient transmission. It means revitalizing digital infrastructure to expand access to reliable, high-speed broadband internet in every pocket of the country, especially rural areas and underserved communities. And it also means investing in our drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, cleaning up and restoring our land, and investing in programs to reduce air pollution for our kids.

Guaranteeing clean water for all

The American Jobs Plan proposes a $111 billion investment in water infrastructure, including a $45 billion investment to replace 100% of lead service lines and pipes through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act grants. Replacing lead service lines is vital for public health and yet EPA estimates that six to 10 million homes in the United States and up to 400,000 schools and daycare centers have lead service lines. The impact of lead exposure, including through drinking water, is a serious public health issue and its adverse effects on children are all too well known. In children, lead can cause irreversible and life-long health effects, including decreasing IQ, focus, and academic achievement.

The plan also would invest $56 billion in grants and low-cost flexible loans to states, Tribes, territories, and disadvantaged communities across the country to upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants, and support clean water infrastructure across rural America. The American Jobs Plan also provides $10 billion in funding to monitor and remediate PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in drinking water and to invest in rural small water systems, and household well and wastewater systems, including drainage fields.

In total, these investments will create millions of good paying jobs, including union jobs.

We know from experience that water infrastructure investments not only improve public health-they also create good-paying jobs. Through our State Revolving Funds, EPA has already provided more than $189 billion in financial assistance to nearly 43,000 water quality infrastructure projects and 16,500 drinking water projects. This has created over 300,000 jobs in the last two years alone. Through the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan program, EPA has provided $9 billion in credit assistance to help finance more than $19 billion for water infrastructure while creating nearly 47,000 jobs and saving ratepayers $4 billion.

Investing in clean buses for kids

When I was a kid growing up in Eastern North Carolina I had to use an inhaler, an experience familiar for far too many kids. That is why the American Jobs Plan proposes to electrify at least 20 percent of our yellow school bus fleet through a new Clean Buses for Kids Program at EPA. We know this type of investment works and that it is important to protect kids on their way to and from school. Since 2008, Congress has provided funding through EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) for more than 28,000 school bus upgrades, including more than 4,000 school bus replacements. The Clean Buses for Kids Program is a new program, which would build on the lessons learned from DERA while leaving the existing program intact.

Reducing emissions from school buses has demonstrated positive health benefits for the children who ride them, the drivers, people around school bus loading areas, and the communities in which they operate. These investments will also boost market demand to create jobs, build out infrastructure and support U.S. manufacturing.

Cleaning up and restoring our land

In the 40 years since the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) was signed into law, we have significant progress on cleaning up and restoring our land, but the work is far from over. Under my leadership, EPA will do everything in its power to hold bad actors accountable for environmental degradation and return land to safe and productive use for communities. Communities located within one mile of Superfund sites are disproportionately communities of color and low-income. Remediation of these sites will strengthen climate resilience, improve public health, and expand job opportunities both in these communities, and the nation at large.

The American Jobs Plan proposes a $5 billion investment in the remediation and redevelopment of Brownfield and Superfund sites, as well as related economic and workforce development programs. Cleaning up contaminated sites so they can be returned to productive use can be an engine for economic development across the country. Since Congress started the Brownfields program, federal investments have leveraged $34.6 billion, supported over 176,000 jobs, and thousands of properties have been cleaned up or made ready for reuse.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I want to reiterate how crucial the American Jobs Plan is to achieve our shared goal of reducing pollution and putting people to work. With these investments we can tackle the climate crisis with the urgency it requires and ensure the benefits of a cleaner environment are enjoyed by all Americans.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to our continued partnership to achieve these ambitious yet necessary goals and welcome any questions you may have.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, Administrator, I appreciate you being here.

And, Secretary Raimondo, you have been well introduced by Senator Reed. I am glad to see someone from one of the southern States in New England. Please go ahead.

STATEMENT OF HON. GINA M. RAIMONDO, SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby. Thank you to members of the committee.

It's an honor for us to come before you to talk about the President's American Jobs Plan and to have the opportunity to hear your concerns and to answer your questions, and special thanks to Senator Reed for an overly generous introduction.

The American Jobs Plan puts forward historic public investments, investments that are necessary to make sure that every American has the opportunity to get a decent well-paying job and to position America to out-compete on the global stage.

The plan calls for strategic investments in a number of areas that will ensure we can strengthen our workforce and our companies, rebuild our infrastructure, and secure America's global leadership.

As the Secretary of Commerce, I'd like to highlight the importance of these investments as they relate to a few specific areas.

Number one, expanding access to broadband. I think we can all agree that every American deserves to have access to high-quality affordable broadband.

Number two, strengthening our supply chains and domestic manufacturing for critical industries, such as semi-conductors.

And, number three, training and upskilling our workforce. Every American ought to have a chance to get a decent well-paying job and that means they ought to have the skills necessary in order to get a job and succeed.

Additionally, the Jobs Plan calls for significant investments in upgrading childcare facilities and school construction, which I know are very important to this committee, and I will say I've been very proud of the work that I have done with Senator Reed during my time as Governor.

I can tell you from my own experience and Senator Reed's experience in Rhode Island and our investments in schools and in childcare facilities that they work. When I began my experience as Governor, Rhode Island, unfortunately, had the highest unemployment rate in the country, not a distinction that we were proud of, and so during my administration and with the support of the Federal Government, we made infrastructure investments a priority, including in schools and libraries, in childcare facilities, and also in job training and in apprenticeships, and I'm very proud to say that prior to COVID, we had the lowest unemployment rate in a generation and more jobs ever than ever in our state's history.

So we know investments in infrastructure pay off and create jobs.

My job as Commerce Secretary is to do everything that I can to enable America businesses of all sizes to compete and in my first weeks as Secretary, I've spent a great deal of time talking with business leaders across all industries and everyone agrees we have to invest in broadband, supply chains, manufacturing, research and development, and our workforce.

We need transformational investments in broadband to ensure that all Americans finally have access to high-quality, reliable, affordable broadband. 35 percent of Americans who live in rural communities don't have this. It's unacceptable, and as the Chairman said, we saw during the pandemic that that meant children couldn't go to school, people couldn't go to work, and people couldn't see the doctors.

We also need to strengthen our supply chains so that we can make critical goods in America and put Americans to work rather than outsourcing to countries, such as China. A particular industry that deserves our attention is the semiconductor industry. Semiconductors are the building blocks of our future economy, yet today we are in the middle of a global chip shortage that is hurting businesses in every sector of our economy.

Our Nation is falling behind its biggest competitors with regard to investments in R&D, manufacturing, and training, and it's time to catch up.

I'd also like to take a minute to address a portion of the Jobs Program that is, I think, fundamental to our competitiveness, which is investments in the care economy.

Too often those that provide care, mostly women and women of color, are working full time, living in poverty. The American Jobs Plan prioritizes long-term necessary investments in childcare and home care systems to address these critical issues and they are vital to ensuring that women can stay in the workforce and be productive.

It's time to make these bold investments, to make it easier for our workers and companies to compete, to create tens of millions of jobs, and to position the United States to outcompete China and our foreign competitors.

I look forward to taking your questions.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. GINA M. RAIMONDO

Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, and members of the committee—it is an honor to come before you today to discuss the American Jobs Plan.

The American Jobs Plan puts forward historic public investments necessary to ensure every American has the opportunity to get a decent, well-paying job. Investments that are critical to ensure that we build back better and more equally for everyone. At its core, the American Jobs Plan is about investing in American competitiveness, strengthening our workforce, rebuilding infrastructure, and leveling the playing field for American workers. In the plan, the President proposes strategic investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, workforce development, the care economy and combatting the effects of climate change at the scale necessary to reach every single community in America. Additionally, the President's plan calls for significant investments in school construction, which I know is important to this Committee, and something I was very proud to work on with Senator Reed during my time as Governor.

I can tell you from experience that investments like this work. When I became Governor of Rhode Island we had the highest unemployment rate in the country. During my administration, we made infrastructure and workforce investments like those this package calls for, and before the COVID–19 pandemic, Rhode Island had the lowest unemployment rate in a generation.

As Commerce Secretary, my job is to do everything I can to help American businesses create well-paying jobs for American workers, enable American businesses of all sizes to compete, and empower a more equitable economy. In my first weeks as Secretary, I have spent a lot of time talking with business leaders about what we need to do to be more competitive worldwide—and business leaders agree that we must invest in broadband, supply chains, manufacturing, research and development, and our workforce.

We need transformational investments in broadband to ensure that all Americans finally have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service. During the pandemic we have seen that high-speed broadband service is not a luxury, but a necessity for jobs, education, and healthcare. Yet, by one definition, more than 30 million Americans live in areas where there is no broadband infrastructure that provides minimally acceptable speeds. Due to systemic marginalization, millions of Americans who are disproportionally people of color, low-income, older, disabled, or residents of rural communities lack access to high-speed broadband service.

And, in part because the United States has some of the highest broadband prices among OECD countries, millions of Americans can't use broadband internet even if the infrastructure exists where they live. The American Jobs Plan proposes a historic investment of $100 billion to bring broadband service to every American. This investment would allow those people to more fully participate in the modern economy and access job opportunities and training.

We also need to strengthen our supply chains so that we can make more critical goods in America and put more people to work rather than outsourcing. The American Jobs Plan calls for $50 billion to support production of critical goods and to create a new office at the Department of Commerce that will monitor domestic industrial capacity. This office will incentivize manufacturers to maintain a robust domestic supply chain; and support manufacturers in vulnerable supply chains, such those for the automotive, machinery, energy, and aerospace industries.

One critical industry that demands our immediate attention is the semiconductor industry. Semiconductors are the building blocks of our future economy; yet today, we are experiencing a global chip shortage that is hurting businesses in every sector of our economy, including the auto industry. The American Jobs Plan supports the $50 billion investment in semiconductor manufacturing and research, as called for by Congress in the bipartisan CHIPS Act. This funding will strengthen and secure our domestic semiconductor supply chain and create tens of thousands of middle-class jobs.

Our nation is also falling behind its biggest competitors with regard to basic investments in research and development, manufacturing, and training. The American Jobs Plan would provide the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST, $14 billion to bring together industry, academia, and government to advance these areas. Under the American Jobs Plan, NIST will quadruple funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, also known as MEP, and expand Manufacturing USA. These investments in proven programs that make U.S. industry more competitive will further incorporate minority-owned and rurally located small- and medium-sized enterprises in technological advancement. With additional resources, NIST will also expand capabilities in emerging technologies such as advanced communication, quantum information science, engineering biology, and artificial intelligence.

In addition to this NIST funding, the American Jobs Plan also calls on Congress to provide additional funding for research and development that spurs innovation and job creation, including in rural areas. The American Jobs Plan will invest $40 billion in upgrading research infrastructure in laboratories across the country, including brick-and-mortar facilities and computing capabilities and networks. These funds would be allocated across the federal research and development agencies.

The changes in the American economy, many of which have been accelerated by the pandemic, are challenging for millions of Americans who recognize that they need additional training to more fully participate in our economy. We cannot improve our competitiveness without investing in our people. The American Jobs Plan calls for bold investments in our workforce. It will spur targeted, sustainable, economic development in places like the Appalachian region that have been affected by changes in energy production, and communities in the Midwest that have been impacted by manufacturing declines. Furthermore, it will expand job training opportunities across the nation. The American Jobs Plan makes the investments necessary to ensure that we will be there to provide high-quality, demand-driven, affordable job training to any American seeking opportunities to increase the knowledge and training they bring to a job.

Finally, the American Jobs Plan will help us maximize the resilience of land and water resources to protect communities and the environment. President Biden's plan will protect and, where necessary, restore nature-based infrastructure—our lands, forests, wetlands, watersheds, and coastal and ocean resources. Families and businesses throughout the United States rely on this infrastructure for their lives and livelihoods.

The American Jobs Plan puts forth bold, necessary investments in America. It's time for us to make bold investments to make it easier for our companies to be more competitive globally, to create tens of millions of jobs, and to position the United States to outcompete China and other foreign competitors. It's time for us to make bold investments so it is easier for the average American to get a decent job and get the training necessary to more fully participate in our economy. It's time to make bold investments in America.

I look forward to working with all of you on the American Jobs Plan. I am happy to take your questions.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary.

And it is good to see Secretary Fudge here, a friend of a long time, and I am glad to have you here. Please, Madam Secretary, go ahead.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARCIA L. FUDGE, SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Secretary FUDGE. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, and Distinguished Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, thank you so much for this opportunity to appear before you today.

Mr. Chairman, before I begin my testimony, I would very much like to take a moment to express my condolences at the passing of former Vice President Walter Mondale, a former member of this body, who, along with Senator Ed Brook, championed the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) will honor his legacy by redoubling our efforts to use housing as a platform that advances equality and opportunity for the American people, efforts which include the plan we are here to discuss, the American Jobs Plan.

The plan lays the foundation for decades of economic growth and reflects what I believe are fundamental truths, that the definition of infrastructure has evolved and that indeed housing is infrastructure.

As a member of Congress for nearly 13 years, I have the highest regard for this institution. I am committed, as I know this Administration is committed, to working with Congress to create millions of good jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and help America become more competitive on the global stage.

To do so, we must first take care of home in the most literal sense. The American Jobs Plan would achieve this goal by prioritizing efforts to address our Nation's severe shortage of affordable housing.

Even before COVID–19, almost 11 million Americans were paying more than half of their income on rent. Since then, the pandemic has put low-income households and communities of color at disproportionate risk of losing their homes.

The American Jobs Plan confronts the affordable housing crisis head on. It invests $213 billion to produce, preserve, and retrofit more than two million affordable and sustainable places to live. This includes more than one million resilient, accessible, and energy-efficient rental homes.

In addition, the plan includes a new Federal tax credit as proposed in the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act that could lead to the construction and renovation of approximately 500,000 single-family homes over the next decade.

At the same time, the American Jobs Plan recognizes investments alone won't solve the affordable housing crisis. In addition, we must eliminate barriers to producing affordable housing and expanding house choices for people with low or moderate incomes.

To solve this problem, the American Jobs Plan calls for an approach that awards flexible funding to local jurisdictions that take steps to eliminate regulations, like minimum lot size or mandatory parking requirements. These types of regulations drive up the cost of producing affordable housing and can lock people out of neighborhoods with greater opportunity.

Furthermore, the American Jobs Plan addresses longstanding public housing capital needs. Nearly two million people live in public housing, including families, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Housing quality plays a key role in the health of our families and communities, yet nearly half of our public housing inventory is more than 50 years old. This means buildings may have hazards, like mold or lead paint that can be expensive to remediate.

The American Jobs Plan calls for investment of $40 billion to improve our public housing infrastructure. This is not just a safety issue but a racial justice issue, as well, as more than one million people of color live in public housing.

Furthermore, investments in public housing that help reduce energy use, increase resilience, or fortify against extreme weather can mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Finally, I would like to mention two other major investments in the American Jobs Plan. They are a $111 billion investment to replace 100 percent of the Nation's lead pipes and service lines and a historic $100 billion investment to bring affordable, reliable high-speed broadband to every American.

These investments are critical to building safer, stronger, and more connected communities.

The American Jobs Plan is a once-in-a-century investment in America's infrastructure that will advance how we live for generations to come. It recognizes that to build our economy and our country back better than before, we need to invest not just in roads and bridges but in housing, in clean drinking water, and in a modernized electrical grid that can withstand the impacts of climate change.

To put it simply, the American Jobs Plan advances physical infrastructure that lays the foundation for human infrastructure. Our country cannot afford to look backward at what we once viewed as a definition of infrastructure. The future of our great Nation rests on the decisions we make today.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARCIA L. FUDGE

Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee: thank you for this opportunity to discuss President Biden's American Jobs Plan.

It is a privilege to appear before you today, and a particular honor for me because this is my first opportunity to testify since being sworn in as Secretary.

The President's American Jobs Plan lays the foundations for decades of economic growth and reflects what I believe are fundamental truths: that the definition of infrastructure has evolved— and that, indeed, housing is infrastructure.

I look forward to discussing with you how the President's plan will meet the critical housing needs of our nation and build an inclusive economy that works for everyone.

Let me say this: As a member of Congress for nearly 13 years, I have the highest regard for this institution. I am committed-as I know this Administration is committed-to working with Congress to create millions of good jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and help America become more competitive on the global stage.

To do so, we must first take care of home—in the most literal sense. The American Jobs Plan would achieve this goal by prioritizing efforts to address our nation's severe shortage of affordable housing.

Prior to the COVID–19 pandemic, almost 11 million renters were paying more than 50 percent of their income on rent. There is no state in the country where an adult earning the minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom apartment. Housing affordability has put homeownership out of reach for many potential first-time homebuyers.

The pandemic has shined a light on the problem we all knew existed prior to COVID–19—and it has disproportionately put low-income households and communities of color at greater risk of losing their housing. It is especially troubling to me that the growing shortage of affordable housing is a contributing factor in the increasing rates of homelessness.

The American Jobs Plan confronts the affordable housing crisis head on.

The plan invests $213 billion to produce, preserve, and retrofit more than two million affordable and sustainable places to live.

Through targeted tax credits, formula funding, grants, and project-based rental assistance, the American Jobs Plan would produce, preserve, and retrofit more than a million affordable, resilient, accessible, and energy efficient rental housing units.

In addition, the plan includes a new federal tax credit, as proposed in the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, that could lead to the construction and renovation of approximately 500,000 single-family homes over the next decade-creating a pathway to homeownership for more families and allowing them to build wealth. Furthermore, it reinvests in communities to improve aging housing stock and maintain value for existing homeowners.

At the same time, the American Jobs Plan recognizes that investments alone won't solve our nation's affordable housing crisis. We must also eliminate barriers to producing affordable housing and expanding housing choices for people with low or moderate incomes.

To solve this problem, the American Jobs Plan calls for an incentive approach that awards flexible funding to local jurisdictions that take concrete steps to eliminate local regulations like minimum lot size or mandatory parking requirements. These types of local regulations drive up the cost of producing affordable housing and can lock people out of neighborhoods that may have more opportunities for them and their children.

The American Jobs Plan will address longstanding public housing capital needs. Nearly 2 million people across the country live in public housing—including families, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Like many of the infrastructure investments in the American Jobs Plan, housing quality plays a key role in the health of families and communities. Yet nearly half of the public housing inventory is more than 50 years old. This means these buildings may have issues like lead paint, mold, and other health hazards that can be expensive to remediate.

The American Jobs Plan calls for an investment of $40 billion to improve our public housing infrastructure and to address these critical safety concerns for residents. This is not just a safety issue but a racial justice issue, as more than one million people of color live in public housing. Furthermore, public housing is often located in severely under-resourced communities and is vulnerable to the dire effects of climate change. Investments that help reduce energy use, increase resilience, or fortify against extreme weather events can help mitigate climate risk.

Additionally, I would like to briefly mention a few of the other noteworthy provisions in the American Jobs Plan—specifically, a $111 billion investment to replace 100 percent of the nation's lead pipes and service lines, and a historic $100 billion investment to bring affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband to every American.

These investments are critical to building safer, stronger, and more connected communities that are better positioned to thrive as we face the future.

In closing, The American Jobs Plan is a once in a century investment in America's infrastructure that will advance how we live for generations to come.

It recognizes that to build our country and our economy back better, we need to invest not just in future-proofed roads and bridges—but in housing, in clean drinking water, and in a modernized electrical grid capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change.

The American Jobs Plan is physical infrastructure that lays the foundation for human infrastructure. Our country cannot afford to look backward at what we once viewed as the definition of infrastructure. The future of our great nation rests on the decisions we make today.

On behalf of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, thank you very much, all of you. I appreciate also, Madam Secretary, what you just said about infrastructure.

I have heard many say that the President's proposal has little to do with infrastructure, and I think that is because they define the term too narrowly. As I said earlier, we can no longer view infrastructure as just roads and bridges and rail and highways. It is about our capacity to grow in a global economy and actually be able to compete and not fall way behind the rest of the world.

It is about America competing on the world stage and that is why we call it the American Jobs Act.

Secretary Buttigieg, what is your response to the criticism of some that this package has little to do with infrastructure?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, of course—sorry. I will learn how to use this microphone.

As the Secretary of Transportation, I'm especially enthusiastic about what it means for roads, bridges, ports, waterways, airports, rail, and transit, but I think it would be a terrible mistake for us to suppose that that's all there is to infrastructure.

Much has been said about the term "traditional" infrastructure, but America's greatest tradition of visionary infrastructure investments has always included decisions that expand the horizon. The Interstate Highway System might not have been considered traditional infrastructure at one time.

Railroads were not traditional infrastructure until we built them, and so at a moment like this when we know that an Internet connection is as important as an interstate connection in order to succeed in today's economy, we think it's absolutely time to have a wider concept of the idea of infrastructure because all of these things go into that foundation for American competitiveness and for a good life available to all Americans.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you. See, I am learning it, too.

Approximately 60,000 addresses in Vermont lack access to quality high-speed broadband. That is roughly 20 percent of Vermont households. That includes the Leahy's household. I pay full price for it. Some days it works, some days it does not. Most days it does not.

Vermont's downtown village centers, schools and libraries largely have good connectivity. The gaps in the network are in the most rural areas of the State. Private companies have decided it is not profitable to build out that last mile.

So, Secretary Raimondo, Vermont wants to make serious inroads in connecting every corner of the State. How does the Administration's broadband infrastructure plan ensure not only that that can happen quickly, but that it reaches the places where it is needed the most?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you. The President's Jobs Plan calls for all Americans to have access to high-quality affordable broadband and there's an emphasis on speed and there's no compromise with respect to the fact that all means all. That includes Tribal lands, rural lands, mountainous lands, and et cetera.

I've had the opportunity to talk to many of you about this. At the moment, Commerce is in the process of implementing the $1.5 billion from the last package for Tribal broadband and the emphasis is on speed and quality and that's a downpayment on the $100 billion proposed in the Jobs Plan which we believe is enough to ensure that every American has access to high-quality broadband,

and we will be working in conjunction with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) and the Department of Agriculture to ensure that this becomes a reality.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, you know, I look at previous funding rounds. We had the FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. We gave auction winners 7 years to construct their networks, but it included no penalties if they failed on their commitments.

Do you have any concern that if you have an auction or a bidding model, it could well subsidize corporations or satellite technology?

Secretary RAIMONDO. So we have studied—I have looked at prior programs, including the BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunities Program) Program, and we are learning from them, and we won't make the same mistakes again.

The Jobs package is clear that we will provide—we will work with the entities that are in the best position to provide broadband and if that is a nonprofit or a co-op or a municipal operation, then that's, you know, how we will operate.

We will also consider alternatives to fiber in the cases where that is the best, most effective way to deliver broadband.

Chairman LEAHY. Well, thank you, and my office will work with you.

My time is up. So I am going to just give Administrator Regan a question for the record because we know that infrastructure is no longer just our bridges and roads. Our natural infrastructure—farmland, watersheds, and so on—are important.

So I am going to ask how EPA can coordinate with other agencies in making sure we protect our wetlands, our watersheds, and so forth. My staff will give you that question, and I would appreciate the answer.

Senator Shelby.

Senator SHELBY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the area that we've been talking about, outcompeting China, the American Jobs Plan promises to position the U.S. to outcompete China by providing massive subsidies to grow domestic manufacturing capabilities in certain segments of the economy.

Secretary Raimondo, I would like to ask you about the sustainability of this approach, which I view as having the U.S. emulate China rather than defeat it. If we go down this road, will the American taxpayers ever be off the hook, and in a capitalistic economy like ours, why is this approach so an effective way to defeat China, Ms. Secretary?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Yes. Thank you for that question, an incredibly important question.

It is not an exaggeration to say at the moment that we have a crisis in our supply chain. Not that long ago, America led the world in making leading edge semiconductor chips. Today, we produce zero percent of those chips in America, zero percent. That's a national security risk and an economic security risk.

The Department of Defense has been warning us for years that the decline in our small- and medium-sized manufacturers and critical supply chains is a national security risk.

So I hear you. I hear the concern that this might look like a subsidy to profitable companies and again I understand that. That is not what this is. This is an investment in research and development to ensure that we can protect ourselves. We are totally reliant on Taiwan and China for critical supply.

The last thing I'll say is we will implement this program in a way that requires these companies to have skin in the game. It's not a give-away. They will have to make investments two, three, four times as much private capital, as you said, public-private partnerships, to fully leverage what I believe, the President believes are necessary public investments to maintain our national and economic security.

Senator SHELBY. Secretary Buttigieg, the American Jobs Plan also promises transformative investments that will turn "shovel-worthy items into shovel-ready ones."

We all remember well the shovel-ready projects that were promised as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Those projects, for the most part, and the jobs that were supposed to come with them never materialized.

How will this time be different from what we've had before, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Thank you for the question, Mr. Vice Chairman.

I would say that certainly in my part of the country, we were glad for the resources that came our way by way of the 2009 Recovery and Reinvestment Act, but I think it's very important to make clear that this bill is not about short-term economic stimulus. It's about long-term economic competitiveness.

There is certainly a backlog of what might be called shovel-ready projects. We estimate something on the order of a trillion dollars just in terms of the maintenance need of America's transportation infrastructure.

But we're also interested in supporting planning, supporting development, supporting the steps that will make sure that projects that might go into the ground at a later date are ready to go.

Again, I would not view this as something that's just about getting through this season, which I know is part of why we needed the American Rescue Plan so urgently, but really about making sure that by the time I retire, I can look back on the choices we made now and know that they set America on a healthy path for the longer term.

Senator SHELBY. I mentioned in my opening statement specifically, and I want to get into it a little, for years a lot of us have been frustrated by the fixation on building new things over responsibly investing in existing infrastructure.

I think we need to do both always. We've got to look to the future but we've got to see where we are today. We have a lot of crumbling infrastructure in this country. Look at the interstate highways, look at bridges that are unsafe, and all this, and look at airports that need to be modernized. We can go on and on and on.

But shouldn't we spend a lot of money on what we're doing to bring everything up to par and also look to the future, a combination, rather than just have a theory?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Yes, very much so. The phrase we use around our department is "fix it first," the idea that we've got to make sure we take care of what we've got. But to that, we might add "fix it right," especially in the context of resilience.

If a road that was built a certain way 50 years ago is washing out on an annual basis, it might not make sense to rebuild it on an annual basis, right, and the way it was in the wake of increased frequent and severe weather.

So we certainly agree with you that it needs to be both, look into the future but looking after what we've got.

Senator SHELBY. Mr. Secretary, you've been in the private sector and you understand that there's so much more money in the private sector looking for good investment, as you well know, than it is with us trying to tax the people and spend on worthy projects and so forth.

How do we address that shortfall? In other words, we should be embracing some type of partnership of some kind using some taxpayers' money to access a lot of private capital that's in it to make a profit. As you know, they have to do that. But there's so much money out there. How do we do that?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, to the extent that there is private capital that can be responsibly mobilized toward our U.S.——

Senator SHELBY. Do you agree with me that there's a lot more private capital looking for good investment?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Certainly.

Senator SHELBY. Mm-hmm. So how do we do it?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, we can build on some authorities and programs that we have. I would point to the private activity bond authority, PABA, that we use in the department, but certainly recognize there are other areas we could also explore to mobilize that private side capital.

Senator SHELBY. To Secretary Raimondo, the American Jobs Plan proposes an expenditure of $50 billion, $50 billion for a new office at the Department of Commerce dedicated to monitoring domestic industrial capacity, I don't know what that means, and funding investments to support production of critical goods. We mentioned this earlier.

You know, we have the Defense Production Act. We got DARPA. We got a lot of things going out there.

What will this new office do specifically that's not being done today and how will the funding be used and what supply chain benefits would this new office provide that isn't possible under existing authorities, such as the Defense Production Act?

You know, we've been on the cutting edge of technology as far as national security that's helped America stay free, but what will this office do? Will it be another bureaucracy, another layer, or what do you envision?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you. Thank you for the question.

Over the past 30 years, we have seen an unbelievable decline in manufacturing in a number of critical areas, metals, critical minerals, semiconductors, lithography, medicine, pharmaceuticals.

I will tell you it was just about a year ago as the Governor and your governor was probably doing the same thing, we were up all night long calling all around the world to try to get our hands on ventilators and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and they weren't being made here. They were in China and Vietnam and that was a scary place to be.

So what the Department of Commerce needs to do now, in partnership with DOD (Department of Defense), is to do a really extensive detailed technical look at where our vulnerabilities are and then build again so we make these critical elements in America. That could be, you know, loans to small- and medium-sized companies. That could be research and development. That could be partnerships with universities.

We have to build it up again not just to create jobs but, frankly, to protect our national security when we need to have these critical items produced on our shores.

Senator SHELBY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

Senator Feinstein.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am here representing a State that is 12 percent of the Nation's population. We're bigger than 21 small States and the District of Columbia put together. Our GDP is bigger than the 25 smallest States combined. We've got over 1,500 bridges, 14,000 miles of highway in need of repair. Our drinking water requirements require $51 billion in additional funding, and White House figures say that 3,127,000 Californians are rent-burdened.

We are going to have real future problems due to our size. I think this is a very good bill. I'm really proud of the Administration for putting it forward. Of course, I'm a former Mayor and infrastructure is extraordinarily important, but my question is how are you going to make sure that the money this Congress provides in this bill is going to go where it's really needed?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Senator, if I may take that up from a transportation perspective and then I'll defer to my colleagues for other examples, but it's very important to us to make sure that funding is equitably distributed and done with a view toward the public policy goals that the communities in every State, including yours, are put forward.

We have a focus on sustainability and equity and we know that communities in every part of the country can put forward a compelling case for funding and look forward to being better able to meet that need should the American Jobs Plan give us the tools to do it.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Okay. I know it's a hard question for you to answer, but it's also a critical one. It's my understanding that the infrastructure plan would include $213 billion to address the shortage of affordable housing.

Does the Administration's infrastructure proposal include resources for emergency shelters and transitional housing in order to meet the needs of families' currently experiencing homelessness?

Secretary FUDGE. Senator, thank you so much for your question.

Yes, in fact, in the Rescue Plan, there was $5 billion set aside for those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless as well as another $5 billion to address how we deal with emergency housing vouchers. So those things were actually in the Rescue Plan and we are looking forward to getting the kind of data and oversight that is needed to make sure that it is being used in the way that it has been appropriated and will be working on it through this plan, as well.

Senator FEINSTEIN. I think that's very important and I thank you for it.

Do you include resources for emergency shelters and transitional housing in order to meet the needs of individuals and families who are currently homeless?

Secretary FUDGE. Yes, Senator, in the Rescue Plan.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Could you explain that a little bit, please?

Secretary FUDGE. Yes. In the Rescue Plan, we have emergency vouchers that can be used for temporary housing and, of course, our goal is stable long-term housing, but it is emergency housing, as well as one of the things I can say about California that is going so very well, in places like Los Angeles, they have actually gone about purchasing hotels and motels and using them, even the ones they haven't purchased, to take people off the streets and to get them into at least temporary but in some instances permanent housing.

We know that on any given night, 580,000 people are homeless in this country, and so I appreciate the fact that you asked the question and we really are making every effort possible to be sure that we can eradicate at least in the short term get people off the streets.

Senator FEINSTEIN. Well, let me just make this comment. I thank you for that statement. I hope the Administration follows through. I am really concerned because if you take a State like mine, which is big and on its surface looks to be one thing, the better you know it, the more you see it's many other things, and they are needy and they need help and the help is necessary because it also fuels a huge economy.

So I thank you very much for the response, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you very much.

The Senator from Maine, Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, let me welcome all of our witnesses today. Secretary Buttigieg, I'm going to start with you. I have long advocated for a robust infrastructure package and I agree with the phrase you used today that "fix it first" should guide our approach.

However, when I look at President Biden's proposal, it does not seem to embody that philosophy. For example, the Administration's proposal, as you know, would spend $174 billion on electric vehicle subsidies, charging stations, and other provisions compared to spending $157 billion on roads, bridges, ports, airports, and waterways combined.

Now it's certainly appropriate to look ahead and to accommodate future cleaner modes of transportation, but what the Administration is doing is spending billions more on subsidies related to electric vehicles than on the roads and bridges on which they will travel. Could you explain that?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Sure. And thank you for the question.

The roads and bridges and highways of this country have, of course, a multilayered set of resources to support them. When it comes to electric vehicles, we are much earlier in America's story and what we see now is that the story is beginning to show America falling behind.

We believe robust public investment is needed in order to make sure that America leads the future when it comes to electric vehicles, especially from the perspective of making sure that the electric vehicles of the world are made on American soil by American workers, and we think that in order for that to happen in a way that might be reminiscent perhaps of how the U.S. aviation sector might not have blossomed the way it did if not for New Deal era investments in airports across the country.

But this does require good public policy in order to support the flourishing of a market that we think will put so many Americans to work as well as help meet our climate goals.

Senator COLLINS. Secretary Fudge, I wanted to turn to you for my next question and welcome you, as well, to the committee.

Secretary FUDGE. Thank you.

Senator COLLINS. Safe, affordable housing has long been a goal of Senator Jack Reed and me as we chaired or acted as Ranking Member of the THUD (Department of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development) Subcommittee. I also led the Floor fight to preserve the Fair Housing regulations during President Obama's Administration.

I am concerned, however, that the Administration is taking a very heavy-handed approach to achieving the goal of affordable housing and let me give you the specifics.

The Administration's proposal includes $5 billion for a new grant program to be awarded to jurisdictions that make changes in local zoning laws, and I am troubled by having the Administration, the Federal Government dictate local zoning laws.

I would also note that that $5 billion is larger than the entire funding for the Community Development Block Grant Program which is arguably the Nation's most popular and certainly has been its largest community development program.

Will the Administration tie access to other Federal funding to changes in local zoning laws and land use policies in your department?

Secretary FUDGE. First off, thank you so much for the question and thank you for the conversations we've had about fair housing, Senator.

Let me first say that the $5 billion, it's not a mandate. It's not a dictate. What the plan is, is to have a discussion with communities about how we can make zoning less exclusionary and more inclusionary.

I'm a former Mayor. I would never be in support of demanding or dictating that communities have to change their zoning to do a certain thing, but I think it is important as we are talking about building and/or retrofitting or rehabilitating, whatever term you'd like to use, housing, we know that the cost of those are significantly higher when the zoning is more restrictive.

So this is more an incentive, more a conversation, but I'd love to have this conversation with you going forward because I think it's important.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. I believe Senator Reed is going to be joining us virtually, is that correct?

Then Senator Tester, who is here not only virtually but definitely actually.

Senator TESTER. That's exactly right, Mr. Chairman. I'm here in all my good looks.

Thank you, and thank Senator Shelby for having this hearing, and I want to thank everybody who's testifying, and I appreciate all your good work.

I'm going to start with Secretary Raimondo. Secretary, 20 years ago, I'm not that broadband would be part of any infrastructure bill but things have changed and, quite frankly, the fact that this pandemic has pointed out that whether you want to do business or you want to do telehealth or you want to do distance learning, broadband's pretty damn important, and I am pleased that President Biden proposes a substantial investment in high-speed Internet in this plan.

But I'm going to tell you that connecting folks, especially in rural America, is going to take more than money. It's going to take good maps. It's going to take a workforce to put in the infrastructure. It's going to take identifying carriers with the best solutions and a commitment to building out the hardest-to-reach areas, and the bottom line is that any new broadband investment has to be targeted to rural areas that don't have service or are underserved and it has to be done in a way that's going to get results.

So, Secretary Raimondo, would you agree that securing high-speed Internet for all America isn't going to just be about money, it's going to be about a lot more than that, and how are you going to address those challenges?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you for the question—we've talked about this a few times.

It's absolutely about more than money, although we need the money, as well. It's going to require great consultation with the communities. For example, we in Commerce have had extensive conversations in the past month with Tribal communities.

I know from my experience as Governor, people in the community know best what the needs are and so it'll require that. It will require better maps and we've already started working with the FCC to have better and more granular maps. NTIA (National Telecommunications and Information Administration) is working on that. We have better data than we did, for instance, during the BTOP Program.

It's going to require flexibility, working with whatever carriers, whether that be the big carriers or smaller or co-ops or nonprofits, who are the best positioned to provide access, and I think it will require an openness to embracing different technologies.

Senator TESTER. Okay. So there is money in this bill for workforce, generally speaking. The question becomes if we pass this bill, the workforce is going to take a minute or two, actually several months, probably a year, maybe not that much, but certainly some time to get out so they're available. How do you address that problem?

Secretary RAIMONDO. So what we are contemplating is to use some of the money to include workforce, workforce training and putting people to work in the process of providing the broadband.

Senator TESTER. Okay. Secretary Fudge, housing is a huge issue in this country. I don't care if you're talking about Ohio or Montana, big city, small city. In Montana, it is truly an anchor on our economy, and I think it could be said that way throughout the country.

Entrepreneurs can't start up businesses because they got no place for their employees to potentially live. Existing businesses can't expand because they got no place for their additional employees to live.

It's a big problem. Affordability is huge, and, by the way, I didn't get into affordability with you, Secretary Raimondo, but that's equally as important as putting fiber in the ground.

Same thing in housing. We can put money in. We can potentially do tax credits. We can potentially develop public-private partners. Some want to do entirely public. I don't care how you go about it.

The point is, is how do you ensure that people can afford to buy the final product?

Secretary FUDGE. Thank you so much, Senator.

We know that the cost of housing today has far outpaced wages. We know that housing affordability is one of the major problems in this country. The things that we are trying to do to assist with making sure that the housing is affordable are a number of them.

One is, of course, we have RAD, which we know has been helpful. We know that if we can use the low-income housing tax credits as well as the new tax credits that the President has proposed, we can make the cost affordable.

In addition, there are options most people don't talk about. There's manufactured housing. There are multi-family units that we can put on a long-term basis to make sure that the rents are moderated and provide the kind of oversight we need.

But the thing that we have to do first is to fix what we've got. We have housing that is more than 50 years old where almost two million people live. So we have to get those properties up to code in most instances and make sure that they remain affordable.

Senator TESTER. So you can answer this in writing afterwards, but you tell me how we're going to do that on existing housing, whether it's going to be direct grants, whether it's going to be buy down of loans, what it's going to be through this bill, if you can.

I agree with you. I just think the devil is somewhat in the detail. If we could do that, that would be great.

Secretary FUDGE. Well, there's home money in this bill that is more than flexible for doing things like building new houses or renovating houses. There is more money in CDBG (Community Development Block Grant), which, of course, we know is flexible, and there are also resources solely set aside to build affordable housing.

So I'd love to talk with you afterwards, but there are resources in the Jobs bill.

Senator TESTER. I appreciate that. Here's my concern. Both the broadband and housing and that is that we put the money in, the financial institutions, they need to make money, but they don't need to make it all. Same thing with the developers, same thing with the builders. We just got to make sure this is affordable in the end. It's critically important, I might add, but we got to make sure it's affordable.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you, Senator Tester.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to each of you for being here this morning and for your service.

I think I've had an opportunity to speak with almost all of you about some of the considerations in Alaska, the unique aspects. I hear the comment that the definition of infrastructure has evolved.

Well, in certain parts of my State, there's nothing to fix. There's no crumbling infrastructure because we haven't built it yet. There's no lead in the water pipes because we don't have the water pipes. So for me, basic infrastructure is really just that, but as we recognize, as my friend from Montana has said, broadband is one of those tools that if we don't have it, we're not a participant in the broader market out there.

But again when I think about a transportation infrastructure, we don't have a transportation grid, so to speak, in Alaska. We don't have an energy grid, so to speak. We have micro grids. When I think about the roads, rails, and bridges, I also recognize that I come from a State where 80 percent of our communities are not connected by road, and I'm not looking to connect them by road, but we have access to water that we would like to be able to utilize more readily to connect these communities.

So, Secretary Buttigieg, we've talked. We are looking to develop a more fulsome proposal for our Alaska marine highway system, recognizing that ferries are like your bus in your community, just a little bit longer distance and the path is on a different surface. So know that I'm seeking to look to work with you on that.

Secretary Raimondo, when we're talking about broadband, we are again in a little bit different situation. There's about 40 percent of Alaskans that have been identified as not having access as we are defining access to broadband, but to Senator Tester's point, it's not just about access, it's then affordability.

We're seeing families in certain parts of the State where they're paying an additional $800 per month for their Internet because they've got to be online for business purposes, the kids have to be online for schooling purposes. That's not accessibility to broadband. So the affordability piece is absolutely key.

It is building out in all ways. When you have a State that's one-fifth the size of the United States in America, we're not going to be able to connect everything by fiber. It's just not possible. So what are we doing to connect utilizing our satellites? We need the cell towers. We need kind of all of the above. We need an all of the above energy approach, but we need an all of the above broadband approach, if you will, as well. So I'd ask that you work with us on the Alaska plan.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

I'm going to direct my comments or my questions, I guess, to Administrator Regan, and I appreciate your role in all of this as we talk about water and wastewater.

I've been with the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee for some years now and spent a lot of time looking at the water and our water resources. Within the President's proposal, it's $111 billion for water infrastructure and other water-related efforts. This is a remarkable amount for a one-time investment.

You noted in your testimony the State revolving funds in their history have provided approximately a $189 billion in financial assistance. If we look to the fiscal year 2021 budget, the EPA was funded at $9.3 billion in total.

So this is a massive amount of investment. We know that we have to maintain proper oversight to guard against waste and fraud. How do you execute this and how do you do so in a way that again provides for that level of oversight that is important but also recognizes that you've got a great degree of discrepancy and disparity between, say, for instance, the Flint, Michigan, that is replacing all of their infrastructure and small native, very remote and very expensive communities that have absolutely nothing other than the honey bucket that they currently use?

Mr. REGAN. Well, thank you for that question, Senator, and the good news is we have experience doing this.

To the point you made, we've been operating with water infrastructure grants and loan programs for quite some time, over $19 billion worth of grants given out over a number of years, and we've created hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The reality is, is in many Alaska native villages, as you know, they don't have any drinking water and wastewater capabilities right now. I believe in Alaska, you all have over $1 billion in water infrastructure needs. In my home State of North Carolina, there's somewhere between $17 and $20 billion worth of infrastructure needs.

The Affordable Jobs Plan does look at $111 billion of water infrastructure needs while the country needs/requires 743. So this is an excellent start to invest in our water infrastructure, but we have a long way to go.

The good news is EPA has experience in administering these programs, partnering with local governments to look at where the needs are the most, and ensure that we have the proper oversight to get those precious resources where they're needed the most.

It is a ramp-up but it's a ramp-up that's required to keep this country competitive.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to each of our witnesses for your testimony today and for your great work.

I want to start with you, Secretary Buttigieg, because for years New Hampshire has had the lowest apportionments in the country from Federal formula grant programs administered by the Federal Transit Administration and the Highway Administration and just to give you some examples, in 2021, we received roughly $181 million in Federal Highway funding.

Now that's the lowest in the country and far less than our neighboring State of Vermont which received roughly $222 million. Now I would never suggest that the State of Vermont, home to my neighboring Senators and, of course, the Chairman of this committee, doesn't deserve that $222 million.

I just want to know how New Hampshire can get parity with what's happening with the rest of the country, and I know that Congress and the department have been reluctant to open up formula issues in the past, but at this point, we need to do something about the lack of parity.

So can you talk about how you see maybe approaching that issue and what measures and formula factors might help address those inequities?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, thank you for the question and certainly it would be so important not only in the context of the Jobs Plan but our ongoing work to make sure that there's a sense of equitable distribution of these funds and I'd be eager to spend a little more time understanding some of the dynamics that have led to this disparity that you're discussing in New Hampshire.

What I would say is that we think we should always be looking both at the way we do things and at the discretionary programs that are opening up, especially as we're working to make sure that the terms of the discretionary programs reflect public policy priorities that I know are important in New Hampshire around economic security as well as things like climate readiness and equity and so would welcome a chance to discuss this further and look at what we can do so that no one living in any State of the U.S. would wonder whether their home area is getting a fair share.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. You will hear from us.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Understood.

PFAS

Senator SHAHEEN. Administrator Regan, I'm very pleased that the American Jobs Plan calls for $10 billion for drinking water specifically to address PFAS pollution, which has turned up in a number of communities in New Hampshire and caused significant problems, and as you know, it's becoming a bigger issue around the country.

Can you talk about more specifics around how that $10 billion is going to be used and give us some assurances that it's going to be available to some of those households who depend on private wells that have been contaminated through PFAS?

Mr. REGAN. Well, thank you for that question, and, unfortunately, too many of us have firsthand experience with the devastation of PFAS in our drinking water and what it means for public health and also what it means for economic impact to many of our local communities.

That money specifically will focus on monitoring and remediating these pervasive problems that we're seeing all across the country. EPA has prioritized the PFAS topic from day one. We're looking forward to moving aggressively to setting a drinking water standard.

We're also looking at partnering with many communities all across the country to think about how we can do a better job monitoring these pervasive chemicals and also remediating in the areas that are in most need.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so will there be help available to private well owners who have been affected by PFAS in some form?

Mr. REGAN. Small water systems, households, I believe we may be considering private wells. I have to take a look at that, but we do know that this problem has been particularly impactful in our rural communities which will have a tremendous amount of private well owners, as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I hope that that will be something that you'll look at as part of providing help.

You talked about the standards that EPA is still trying to determine. That's created a real challenge for us in New Hampshire. Our first identification of PFAS pollution was at the former Pease Air Force Base and the Air Force has been very accommodating in coming in and trying to help address remediation there, but one of the challenges has been the difference between the EPA's standard, which is, I think, 70 parts per trillion, and the standard that's been set by New Hampshire's Department of Environmental Services, which is much lower than that.

So can you talk about how you're looking at that standard and when you expect to have something that might be more in keeping with what's happening across the rest of the country?

Mr. REGAN. Absolutely. I think that the Federal Government is playing catch-up to where many of the States have had to step in. So we've ramped up the machinery. We're moving as aggressively as we can, taking a look at what progressive States have done, like my home State of North Carolina and others, to address this, look at where the science is also leading us so that we can set a level playing field across all of our States.

In addition to that, in addition to looking at the science, looking at what the other States are doing and preparing for setting of standards, we're in conversations with the Department of Defense, as well, to better understand all of the players and what we need to do to address these pervasive contaminants as quickly as possible.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I look forward to seeing what the EPA comes up with and, as you point out, it's a huge issue.

Chairman LEAHY. I believe next in line is Senator Blunt.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Chairman, and again welcome to all of you today. Thanks for being willing to serve in these jobs that have so much impact on the lives of every American every day.

Let me focus a little bit on the road and bridge, the traditional infrastructure elements of this package. Missouri's right in the middle of the country and we can make the case that the rivers come together, the roads come together, the railroads come together where we live. So it's critically important to us that we get this right.

Secretary Buttigieg, I'm a little unclear in the President's proposal how the current Highway Trust Fund fits in. Do you see that as a revenue source or do you see your proposal for roads and bridges above what would have happened in the current spending of the Highway Trust Fund?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Thank you for the question and the chance to explain this.

We would regard it as the latter. In other words, part of why the American Jobs Plan contemplates a means to fully pay for everything laid out in the President's priorities is so that it could be fitted alongside what would take place in terms of the regular process of surface authorization appropriations and other things that do draw on the Highway Trust Fund.

So the funding structure that you see but also just the level at which we propose investing is designed based on the expectation that there would be in parallel the work that needs to take place in the sort of regular pattern of looking after those needs.

Senator BLUNT. Well, let's go ahead and talk about the Trust Fund for a minute. You mentioned, and I think in response to a question about vehicles on the highway that don't fill up at the gas pump, don't pay the gas tax, increasing number of vehicles that will mostly be electric, but I'm not sure exactly how propane vehicles are affected in the future or battery or other kinds of power, besides electric power, that might be out there.

What are we thinking? We've got a Highway Trust Fund that produces about $300 billion over 8 years and spends about $500 billion if we stay on the current formula. Is that gap acceptable for the future or do we need to be looking at electric vehicles? Do we need to be looking at whatever extra costs the system has to bear because of driverless vehicles? How do we continue to make this system as much as possible sustained by the people who actually use the system as opposed to people who don't?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. So as you say, there is a gap between the traditional revenue sources coming into the Highway Trust Fund and the needs that the Trust Fund looks after.

Up until now, that gap has been met by General Fund transfers. Whether that is to become a policy, I suppose, is something we would need to continue discussing with Congress, but again I would stress that in the context of the Jobs Plan. We have a proposal that fully funds these once-in-a-lifetime capital investments on its own terms and, of course, it's very important to the President to keep his promise not to propose a plan that would raise taxes on Americans making less than $400,000 a year.

Senator BLUNT. So is there a way to deal with that ongoing maintenance issue for people who make more than $400,000 a year or companies that use the highways, the roads, the bridges, as well?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, certainly that's an example of an area that's separate from the individuals making less than $400,000 and we've heard from a lot of companies, a lot of businesses expressing interest in being willing to contribute to greater revenue because, of course, that benefit is felt on their bottom line as well as by ordinary Americans, and I welcome the idea that this is a season for exploring the long-term future of how we can fund these priorities, aside from the once-in-a-generation opportunity we see in terms of the Jobs Plan.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Secretary.

Secretary Raimondo, I do want to associate myself with Senator Tester's view that on broadband, we need to have access and that's been our focus up till now, but as I think we talked about in your confirmation hearing, we also need to be thinking of affordability and this, you know, from telehealth to going to school to going to work, having access to a system just because it runs by your house doesn't mean you necessarily have the ability to use it.

So I'm interested in that, but on this discussion today, I'm also interested in being sure that we have a system where we're really trying to create that access model to where we're not over-building where people already have a broadband system that they could become part of or we're not looking at maps that aren't accurate and so we assume people have access to a system that's just not there.

Talk to me about those two issues a little bit.

Secretary RAIMONDO. The priority is the unserved and the underserved. That is the clear priority and that is where we will focus. The maps today are better and more granular and NTIA is already working with and has been working with the FCC on the mapping to make sure—the answer is what you're pointing out. It has to be decisions based upon the best data that we have.

As to affordability, I hear you and I appreciate your bringing it up. I'll say I come from a very urban State where access isn't so much the issue. It's all affordability. So intuitively, I very much understand where you're coming from. We can talk at length. I know we're out of time. I think that's why we're calling for more competition, more transparency, and subsidies in the short run where necessary.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you very much, and I understand that we will have Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. I hear him.

Senator REED. Well, you've got the best of both worlds. You can hear me but you can't see me.

Chairman LEAHY. Now we have you on the screen. Thank you.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Let me direct a question to Secretary Raimondo and Secretary Buttigieg. I've been long a proponent of including schools in the American infrastructure plan and, in addition to that, libraries because they play a critical role and as a former Governor, Madam Secretary, could you comment on the importance of rehabilitating and rebuilding our schools and libraries as part of our infrastructure plan?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you for the question.

It's absolutely vital that we include schools and libraries in the rebuilding and I would like to comment on Senator Reed's longstanding advocacy for investments in libraries.

I know firsthand in Rhode Island it's made a great difference to our communities. Schools matter. You and I, Senator Reed, worked together in Rhode Island to bring about a historic school building bond. It not only created jobs in the process of rebuilding schools but it has given children what they deserve, which is the opportunity for a first-class free public education in the state-of-the-art building.

As it relates to libraries, I often talk about how my grandfather, when he was an immigrant to this country, taught himself English in the library. Today, libraries are so much more than just a place to get a book. It's a place to find a job, to have access to broadband as we've been talking about. It's in the community. It is a free public resource and I think the short answer to your question is it's absolutely vital.

Senator REED. Secretary Buttigieg, as a former Mayor, could you comment, please, too?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Certainly. We regard libraries as a very important part of our ability to serve the community and contrary to expectations, as Secretary Raimondo is saying, in many regards their importance has actually grown and not diminished in the Digital Age.

The same, of course, with regard to schools and to take the slice of it most adjacent to our work in the Department of Transportation, I'm especially enthusiastic about the school transportation part contemplated in the vision that Administrator Regan mentioned of making sure we support at least 20 percent of our yellow bus fleet being able to electrify.

You know, you talk to so many school superintendents and usually their number one or number two headache that they raise has to do with transportation and we think many of the benefits in terms of cost of operation and, of course, climate that come with electrifying that yellow bus fleet will be to the benefit of education more broadly.

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary Raimondo, climate change is an issue we have to deal with and in fact we have waited too long. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), which is in your Department, is one of the critical agencies in the United States Government to deal with climate, among other things, and it has a $1.6 billion backlog in infrastructure, including ships and dockage facilities. Could you comment on the needs you see to recapitalize NOAA?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you. The needs are extensive. In fact, I've spoken with many of the Senators about vessels or aircraft or ports or NOAA labs in their States and many of them are in poor repair. Of course, Senator Reed has been a strong advocate for the funding of the two NOAA vessels in Rhode Island and the lab associated with University of Rhode Island.

The backlog is real. NOAA is at the front line of all of the research and data collection and ocean mapping that is absolutely vital to our fight against climate change and the backlog is extensive. With the additional funding that President Biden is calling for, it will enable us to address the backlog and maintain and build the necessary infrastructure that NOAA needs in order to continue the fight against climate change.

I will also say as any Senator knows, having these vessels or aircraft or labs in your community also contributes to the economy and that is another benefit of appropriating money to improve the infrastructure and deal with the backlog.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you, Senator Reed.

I believe we are going to be joined remotely by Senator Moran, is that correct? Senator Moran. If he is not, then we would go to Senator Hoeven. Is Senator Hoeven here? If not, Senator Hyde-Smith, who is here in actuality, not remotely. Go ahead, Senator.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Vice Chairman, for convening this hearing today, and to all of you, I certainly applaud your efforts and your willingness to serve this country.

My question is going to be to Administrator Regan. I certainly appreciate you appearing before this committee and congratulate you on your recent confirmation to head EPA, very important agency in my State.

But while I have a number of concerns regarding the American Jobs Plan, I am very pleased that the package proposes measures to advance racial equity and environmental justice.

Today, I would like to discuss one of the most egregious environmental injustices that I have ever observed in my lifetime and I certainly hope EPA under your leadership will be part of our solution.

I'm referring to the Yazoo Backwater Project, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control project authorized by Congress in 1941. Yes, I said 1941, before you and I were even born.

The project features levies, drainage channels, flood gates, and pumping stations which were designed to provide flood protection to a 926,000-acre area across six Mississippi counties. These counties are among the most rural and underserved in the entire Nation. All of the flood control features have been completed, except for the pumping stations, and with an incomplete project, the Federal Government has spent hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars over decades to create what is ultimately a giant bath tub where the water has nowhere to go.

The existing system prevents rainfall from leaving the area protected with the levies. A pumping station is necessary to take that water out and if you see water on both sides of the levies, something is wrong.

In 2007, the Corps was prepared to carry out the pumps, but under the EPA in 2008 exercised its rarely-used authority under the Clean Water Act to veto the Corps then proposal.

Where are we today? The area has experienced catastrophic flooding nine out of the last 10 years. I was Commissioner of Agriculture seven of those years. I was your Steve Troxler in North Carolina.

The flooding has cost lives, homes, businesses, jobs, and billions to the economy and the American taxpayer. We could have paid for these pumps over and over again for what it has cost.

It has also done substantial harm to the environment and sadly to the wildlife. Regarding environmental justice, as I stated previously, injustice, nearly 65 percent of the population is minority, 33 percent of the population lives in poverty, far above the national average, and the median household income is $31,393, far below the national average.

Since 2010, the area population has declined by more than 10,000 and this is a beautiful area of our State, and I have worked on this for many years. People are losing their homes each year because they cannot afford flood insurance or they lose their jobs because they literally cannot get to work because they have to boat into their houses while fighting moccasins, I might add, and boat out.

Businesses aren't interested in locating there because for obvious reasons. It is under water for months on end. Fortunately, the

Corps and EPA—this is good news—have worked very well over the past 2 years to address this issue. The Corps signed a record of decision on a new proposed plan in January.

The EPA determined the new plan strikes an appropriate balance between flood control and the environment and, more importantly, it is not subject to the 2008 404(c) veto. The environmental justice appendix, according to the Corps' final environmental document, concluded the proposed plan as designed would benefit low-income and minority populations in the Yazoo study area.

It is my understanding that the EPA took action last month to review decisions it made in January under the previous Administration when EPA determined that the Corps' new proposal was in the best interest of flood control and the environment and not subject to the 2008 veto.

So we're very, very pleased at this. We've come a long way. Half a million acres of farmland was under water where the farmers could not even plant last year. So 9 out of the 10 years we have a significant problem here.

I'm very committed to working with you on trying to solve this, and, you know, I do feel like that you're very committed to environmental justice and that you're willing to help on an impartial review of that, and so I'm just asking you if you could find time to come to Mississippi and look at this. I would greatly appreciate that.

So I know I'm running out of time, but I so appreciate the opportunity to visit with you and to explain to you in this hearing what's going on for a very long time. So that is all I have to say.

Thank you very much.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

I see Senator Coons has returned from Judiciary. So Senator Coons will be next.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, and thank you to the four members of the President's Cabinet for joining us today. It's been a joy to meet with and talk to each of you in recent months.

I'm excited to work with you on President Biden's agenda to build back better our Nation and to address the need for infrastructure investment and for the creation of jobs. It remains my hope that infrastructure investment can and should be a bipartisan priority, but we need to do what we can and be urgent about the important work of making our country more competitive and more resilient.

If I might, one of the areas of the very broad proposal in the American Jobs Plan I'm excited about is the Civilian Climate Corps, something that I'm supporting with a bipartisan authorizing bill, the Civilian Climate Corps Act, and I hope each of you, as we've discussed, will have some role for your respective agencies.

Secretary Buttigieg, as you know, climate resiliency of rail infrastructure is of particular urgency to me and concern to me, given that I commute via Amtrak on some of the oldest bridges and tunnels in America.

The capital maintenance backlog in the Northeast Corridor is at least $38 billion. So I was pleased to see the American Jobs Plan include $80 billion, of which about half of that may well be dedicated to bringing that up to a state of good repair.

How do you think the department and Amtrak will be prepared to deploy this historic amount of capital in a timely and effective way?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, thank you for the question and for the attention to the urgency of work on the Northeast Corridor and in many parts of our national rail system.

What we know is that many of these projects are well defined and thoroughly designed. Others may still be in various stages of the pipeline but we believe would be ready to go by the time funding reached them.

As you point out, the Northeast Corridor, it's in one place specifically, but we would feel it all the way to Indiana and beyond if there were to be a single point of failure catching up to us and so I would point not only to the $80 billion contemplated in the Jobs Plan but also in our discretionary funding request. Resources for Amtrak and for passenger rail writ large that we believe can and will be deployed efficiently and effectively.

SCALE ACT

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Administrator Regan, I've just introduced the bipartisan and bicameral Scale Act which provides financing and authorization programmatic support for large-scale carbon dioxide transport and storage infrastructure that's critical to scaling up CCUS (Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage). I'm grateful that it's specifically included in the American Jobs Plan.

Could you tell me how you're prioritizing actions that will move us towards our climate goals while also supporting job recovery from COVID–19 through the American Jobs Plan?

Mr. REGAN. Absolutely. I think it's critical that we look at all the tools in the toolbox and look at every bit of technology and research and development that we can.

This has been a priority conversation between myself and Secretary Granholm in terms of how do we support the research and development required for carbon storage while we look at all of the available technologies that are already commercially available to reduce and mitigate against climate change.

You know, when we look at research and development and the advancement of these technologies, these are opportunities to demonstrate climate level discipline domestically while developing emerging technologies by home-grown American jobs and talent that we can export internationally.

We know that if we're first movers on the mitigation of climate change while managing our climate footprint, that we have colleagues across the world that will not be a first mover and as quick as we are. So we'd love to develop the technologies and export those technologies using the ingenuity of the American job force.

Senator COONS. Well, thank you.

Mr. Administrator, I also think the point of the Scale Act is to take existing technologies from demonstration scale to nationwide utility scale and to build the infrastructure necessary to move carbon dioxide and sequester it. I look forward to working with you on that.

Secretary Raimondo, there's so many things in your Department I'm excited to talk about. I don't have time for all of it. I'm just going to pick two. The quadrupling of the manufacturing extension partnership, something in States large and small we've seen really have a tremendous impact, and $14 billion for NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology), an under-appreciated jewel of the Department of Commerce, to work through Manufacturing USA, that network, to bring together industry, academia, and government to advance cutting edge technologies.

What role do you see NIST playing in overseeing Manufacturing USA, and how will that help revitalize our economy and get us on the cutting edge?

Secretary RAIMONDO. I expect NIST to play a very active role. You know, as we've discussed, since 1997, we've lost about a quarter of our small- and medium-sized manufacturers, and the MEP Program is absolutely vital.

In fact, I saw it work. I know it works incredibly well in Delaware. It's about providing job training, collaboration between research and development institutions and small manufacturers, small business loans.

Manufacturing of today isn't my dad's manufacturing. It's more advanced. It's more technical. It's more science-based. If we're going to compete, then we need to make these investments. So I'm excited for it and not only will it create jobs, but it will shore up our industrial base which unfortunately has eroded substantially.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Madam Secretary. I think Manufacturing USA is a smart demonstrated strategy and we should build on it.

My last question, if I might, Secretary Fudge. Housing provides the platform on which everything else good happens in families and communities. Without housing, you can't build a community. I'm grateful for the investments the President's proposing in housing as infrastructure for communities.

I'm a co-sponsor of the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, a new Federal tax credit to cover the cost of building or renovating a home in a distressed area.

What gap do you think the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act will fill in the larger Federal effort to make homes more affordable?

And thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary FUDGE. First off, thank you for sponsoring it.

One of the things that I'm excited about is that it is going to allow small businesses to get into this business and to work in communities where many of them already live. So it empowers the community. It creates jobs. It keeps the costs down. So I think it's an outstanding program and I am hopeful that we can get it passed.

Senator COONS. Thank you. Thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Buttigieg, I appreciate the opportunity to meet with President Biden and yourself yesterday at the White House and thought we had a very good discussion. So thank you for that.

One of the things that we talked about is putting together a bill, a proposal, obviously the Administration has its proposal, but another proposal maybe, and I suggested from the EPW (Environment and Public Works) Committee using the bill that they put forward on transportation and using that as a base to build the proposal and more focused on user fees rather than a tax increase and targeted at infrastructure.

And so I think myself and others are interested in working on that in a bipartisan way. I like the idea that it's a bill that has passed through the EPW Committee, so it has bipartisan support already.

We had some discussion on that, but I wanted to follow up with you and get your thoughts, you know, here at the hearing, as well, in regard to that approach and how you view it relative to, of course, the Administration's proposal from the standpoint of trying to get to a bipartisan solution.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, thank you for that and thank you for your engagement on the bipartisan dialogue.

As you know, it's a goal of the Administration and the President to get bipartisan support here, and as you pointed out, the EPW Committee did something I think very noteworthy in terms of being able to report out their bill unanimously in the last year.

While I think certainly the scale and in some ways the scope of this plan is different, I think many of the principles that were present in that legislation are very much aligned with what we're talking about here and while there are any number of mechanics that could get us from here to where we need to go, I'd certainly welcome a chance to continue speaking in that spirit.

I do want to just quickly delineate between a regular surface transportation bill and what we're seeking to do here in the Jobs Plan in terms of once-in-a-lifetime investment and, of course, those might be contemplated together or separately but just want to stress that what we're envisioning here is over and above what we know needs to happen on a more regular timeline in the American infrastructure spending.

Senator HOEVEN. Right. And there's been a number of Senators on both sides of the aisle that have talked about maybe more than one bill and having something at least in the infrastructure package that's more targeted towards traditional infrastructure, although that could include other things, like broadband, for example, which hasn't traditionally been considered infrastructure, but is and is very important, and I think there'd be a bipartisan support for including that, and other things, as well.

So again it's about, you know, engaging in a process to see if that's a doable proposition. Sounds like something you'd be open to.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. We'd certainly want to talk about how we can gain the most bipartisan support.

Senator HOEVEN. And, you know, we talked about a number of different pay-fors. One of the things I brought up is the Move America Program which is legislation that I've co-sponsored with Senator Wyden. Essentially, that would provide $226 billion in taxexempt bonds or a tax credit to the States that they could utilize and we talked about public-private partnerships and leverage.

We talked about other things, as well. For example, the traditional highway fund but also electric vehicles paying in, those kind of things.

Give me your thoughts on something like Move America where we talk about actually leveraging the Federal investment with not only the States but the private sector through things like Move America, which could help us pay for this infrastructure package.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, the American Jobs Plan, as you know, is a comprehensive vision that is fully paid for through adjustments to our corporate tax structure. But with regard to how transportation infrastructure is funded generally or in regular order, there's certainly a lot of interest in making sure that we have sustainable funding patterns, and I think that the Private Activity Bonds Program that we have in the department is an example of how those private dollars can and have been mobilized to benefit public policy purposes and certainly be interested in talking about other ways, provided, of course, it's consistent with our public policy goals. I think we can put those private dollars to work.

ENHANCEMENTS TO 45Q

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

Administrator Regan, one of the things we're working on, and I know is of great interest to you, is cracking the code on carbon capture and underground storage. In our State of North Dakota, we're very aggressive on that. We've got so many things in place.

One, I want to ask you to come out and see what we're doing, but specifically the question I want to put in front of you is 45Q, the tax credit that we put in place, can really help get that done and commercialize this process, particularly if we enhance it as we're working to do and actually there's support from the Administration to do that and some of its legislation.

I just wanted to ask you about your support for enhancements to 45Q in order to commercialize and really do CCUS, like I say, on a commercial scale.

Mr. REGAN. Thank you for that, Senator, and there's no question you all are first movers and leading the pack.

I think that what is proposed in the American Jobs Plan and what you guys are already doing and demonstrating, we're all going in the same direction. I see a great complement there and look forward to continuing to support that directionally.

Senator HOEVEN. And you'd be willing to come see what we're doing?

Mr. REGAN. Absolutely.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

Senator Schatz.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the great Cabinet Secretaries here for your excellent presentations.

Let me start with infrastructure resiliency. I was really pleased to see the proposal for $50 billion into resiliency activities and I'll be following up with hearings in my subcommittee next month, and

I realize the proposal includes multiagency responses from DOT (Department of Transportation), HUD, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), and other agencies.

So starting with Secretary Fudge and then going over to Secretary Buttigieg, what are you going to do with the money and how are you going to coordinate across agencies? Secretary Fudge.

Secretary FUDGE. First, let me just say thank you, but, of course, the Department of Transportation and HUD work together on many issues. This will be another one of those issues.

Resiliency is so very important. We have spent so many—tens of billions of dollars addressing some of the occurrences over the past 10 years. I know it's been more than $80 billion we've spent.

So we need to be prepared to present resilient communities so that we are prepared going forward and we're going to be working together. The good thing about this team is it is a team and we're all going to be working together to make sure that we get a product that we know is going to be acceptable to you and to the other members of the Senate.

Senator SCHATZ. Secretary Buttigieg.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, first of all, I welcome your call to think about housing and transportation side by side and Secretary Fudge has indicated that's already how we're working.

A mayor does not deal with transportation one day and then housing the next and a family doesn't pay the rent 1 month and then their commuting costs the next. All of these things are tightly integrated and we're going to make sure, whether it's regard to affordability, resiliency, climate readiness or other considerations that we're working hand in hand.

Senator SCHATZ. So we'll help you to flesh all of this out and to clarify the interagency coordination piece.

I'll just add that for those of us who are concerned about the total price tag, $50 billion, the City of Houston alone has requested $60 billion to just the Subcommittee on Transportation and the City of Honolulu has about $19 billion worth of needs. So $50 billion sounds like a lot until you start talking to Louisiana and Texas and Honolulu and California and all of the other places across our country that need these investments in resiliency.

Secretary Fudge, just very quickly, we've talked about how exclusionary zoning limits affordable housing and the President's proposal is really pretty aggressive and pretty innovative.

Can you just tell me more about that?

Secretary FUDGE. Certainly, Senator. We have discussed the fact that we cannot build our way out of this problem. We don't have the resources to do it. We need help. We need for communities to assist us in providing the kind of access to opportunity neighborhoods and to land use. We need to have a conversation about how we can get away from not in my backyard because until we do, we're never going to be able to provide the kind of housing and the location of housing that we should.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you very much.

Secretary Buttigieg, I'm glad to see the $20 billion that's allocated for road safety and safe streets for all. You're probably aware that a lot of State Departments of Transportation say a lot of good things about safe streets for all and complete streets, but where literally the rubber hits the road, they spend all their money on highways anyway and so I'm wondering whether we can work together to ensure that to the extent that we're going to appropriate this money towards this specific public policy that either there are strings attached at State DOT levels or that we just give the money to the local governments who frankly have a sort of better connection to the question of streets and sidewalks and bike lanes.

So your comments, Mayor?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, I certainly agree that often it's the local communities that have the most clear definition of what safety looks like to them, and what we're finding is that different State departments have been taking different approaches, but we want to encourage an approach that really recognizes the many functions of roads in our lives.

I think there is that old mentality that the only reason a road exists is to blast vehicles through as quickly as possible and nothing else matters and what we found is that, you know, roads are for vehicles, they're for pedestrians, they're for bicycles and wheelchairs, and they're for businesses, too, and making sure that that happens safely has to be a top policy priority.

CAFE STANDARDS

Senator SCHATZ. Final question for both you and for Administrator Regan. Where are you with rulemaking on CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. So the President's Executive Order called on us to review both the so-called SAFE One and SAFE Two Rule, working through SAFE One now, expecting a notice to be put out later on in the spring, and then SAFE Two afterwards.

Senator SCHATZ. Administrator.

Mr. REGAN. And we are, based on the President's direction, looking at regulating tailpipe emissions proposal, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking this July, with a more aggressive and more comprehensive proposal to follow.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

Senator Kennedy.

GREEN NEW DEAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Administrator, good morning.

Mr. REGAN. Good morning.

Senator KENNEDY. With respect to the Green New Deal Climate Change portion of the President's infrastructure bill, how much is it going to lower world temperatures?

Mr. REGAN. Well, I think there's a focus on the American Jobs Plan and the President's Climate Goals.

Senator KENNEDY. Yes, sir, but how much is it going to lower world temperatures? That's the purpose of it.

Mr. REGAN. I think when we look at the Climate Summit and the target that the President will announce along with the rest of the world, we'll see comprehensively what collectively——

Senator KENNEDY. Have you done any modeling? I'm just trying to understand. You're asking us to appropriate $2.3 trillion and to tax corporations $1.7 trillion, at least 50 percent of which will fall on the backs of workers because when you tax something, you get less of it, and a big purpose of the infrastructure bill is to lower world temperatures. I mean, that's what global warming climate change is.

So my question is simple. What does your modeling show? How much will this lower world temperatures?

Mr. REGAN. I think the science shows that we collectively have to pursue a target to lower——

Senator KENNEDY. I understand the target, but what I'm trying to—I'm sorry to interrupt, but——

Mr. REGAN. Sure.

Senator KENNEDY [continuing]. I understand the target. The target is one degree Centigrade. I get that part. How much will this bill lower world temperatures?

Mr. REGAN. I think the answer to that is dependent upon in concert with how much this bill plus other actions outside of the bill look at in concert with reducing those targets while creating jobs.

Senator KENNEDY. Have you done any modeling?

Mr. REGAN. Yes, we've done——

Senator KENNEDY. What do your models show in terms of how much this bill will lower world temperatures or slow the progression of CO_2 emissions?

Mr. REGAN. I don't think the modeling speaks specifically to what this bill in isolation will do. I think the modeling shows the targets that we have to look forward to and so in addition to this bill, for instance, there are statutory authorities——

Senator KENNEDY. Well,——

Mr. REGAN [continuing]. And other powers——

Senator KENNEDY [continuing]. Why are we doing this if we don't understand, haven't done modeling to show how much it's going to lower world temperature or lower the progression of CO_2 emissions and methane?

Mr. REGAN. I think, Senator, we're doing this because the Jobs Plan proves that we're doing more than just focusing on climate, that we're positioning ourselves to be global leaders on technology and——

Senator KENNEDY. I get all that, Mr. Administrator. I'm not trying to just pick on you.

Mr. REGAN. Sure.

Senator KENNEDY. But this is what Deputy Foreign Minister Le Yucheng said last week of China on April 16: "Some countries are asking China to do more on climate change. I'm afraid this is not realistic."

So China produces about a third of the world—really about 28 percent, to be fair—of the world's CO_2. Okay? They're not going to participate and we're going to spend $2.3 trillion. A lot of it is climate change. Surely you can give us an estimate of how much it's going to slow the progression of CO_2 and how much it's going to lower world temperature.

Mr. REGAN. Well, I'm not quite sure I take the statement at face value from the Chinese representative.

Senator KENNEDY. Well, maybe he's a liar, but let's put that aside.

Mr. REGAN. China's investing a lot of money in renewable energy and battery storage and being globally competitive in the very areas that this Jobs bill is highlighting.

Senator KENNEDY. I understand. You don't have a figure, do you, Mr. Administrator?

Mr. REGAN. A figure of?

Senator KENNEDY. How much this is going to lower world temperature or reduce the progression of CO_2 in the United States.

Mr. REGAN. I don't have a figure in front of me that——

Senator KENNEDY. You don't have it, do you?

Mr. REGAN [continuing]. Provides how much in isolation this bill lowers the world temperature based on just U.S. participation.

Senator KENNEDY. Right. So we're just going to spend $2.3 trillion and find out on a wing and a prayer?

Mr. REGAN. I think the American Jobs Plan looks at more than just a prayer and a whim. I think it looks at some really good metrics that shows that——

Senator KENNEDY. Right.

Mr. REGAN [continuing]. We can create——

Senator KENNEDY. Excuse me for interrupting but I'm about to run out of time.

Let me ask my former colleague, the State treasurer, our new Commerce Secretary. To build credibility with the Congress, the taxpayers, and his own credibility, as a first step to paying for this $2.3 trillion bill, why wouldn't President Biden turn to the Congress and say I want you to take a look at the discretionary spending in your budget and scrub it?

Secretary RAIMONDO. I don't think it's an either or. The President is calling for a historic investment in infrastructure, as you say $2 trillion. He believes that that's what's necessary and——

Senator KENNEDY. What budget reductions is he recommending?

Secretary RAIMONDO. We're all going through our budgets every day and looking for ways that we can be more efficient, but the truth of it is we need an investment.

Senator KENNEDY. How much money do you think you're going to reduce the budget?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Say it again.

Senator KENNEDY. How much money do you think you're going to reduce your budget?

Secretary RAIMONDO. I don't have a great answer to that at the moment, but I can promise you it's not enough. We're not going to save our way out of decades of under-investment in R&D and in infrastructure. Yes, we need to run an efficient, effective government and the President's clear with us about that.

We also need to invest to grow and to compete and to regain our competitive advantage.

Senator KENNEDY. Right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. I have had a number of Senators go way over their time, including the last one. These are important enough questions. I want to make sure that both Republicans and Democrats are heard, but I am told and I know there are a number of Senators in both parties who want to get to caucuses. So we are going to be a little bit tougher on the timing and——

Senator KENNEDY. I'm glad you didn't start before me, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that.

Chairman LEAHY [continuing]. I understand Senator Merkley is next. Oh, you are right here.

Senator MERKLEY. Right here.

FOREST INFRASTRUCTURE

Chairman LEAHY. I am sorry, Jeff. I apologize.

Senator MERKLEY. No. All good, Mr. Chairman, and I'm just sorry you made that announcement now instead of a few minutes later. So I'll try to cover ground very quickly.

I want to first talk about our forest infrastructure, which you may not immediately think has anything to do with Environment or Commerce, but I want to convince you it does and I want to convince you to work with the Interior Secretary and Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service because the fires we're having out West produce a huge amount of carbon dioxide into the air as well as a major impact on commerce in the State, including not just the fires themselves but also the smoke. I had the experience last September of driving 600 miles and never being out of the smoke and it's an extraordinary sense of how widespread and fierce those fires were burning small communities to the ground, incinerating them.

It was something to behold and unless we rework our second growth forests, unless we manage them differently and do thinning and prescribed burns and mowing, they will continue to burn in this fashion.

So let me start with you, Administrator Regan. Do you recognize the challenge that forest fires represent in terms of carbon dioxide, global warming, and can you help work with Interior to make it an issue that we address?

Mr. REGAN. Absolutely. We recognize the impact to not only climate but we also recognize the impact to air quality and public health.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much.

And Secretary Raimondo, the impact on our wine industry and our venues, so much else, it affects commerce, significant issue. Can I get your commitment to work with Interior on this issue?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Absolutely, yes.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you so much.

I want to turn to the housing issue, Secretary Fudge, and I have a deep interest in this going back to the days that I was Director of Portland Habitat for Humanity and then developed affordable housing, and there are three priorities that many of us are advocating for.

One is choice vouchers be available to everyone who qualifies, that we have a $70 billion investment in repairs to public housing, and, third, $45 billion a year to the Housing Trust Fund. I want to focus on this third part because the Housing Trust Fund addresses the needs of the most vulnerable in our society because 75 percent of the funds would have to go towards support for families that are at or below 30 percent of very mean income and all of the funds would have to go to families that are at 50 percent or less of very mean income, whereas when I was developing affordable housing, it was 80 percent of median income, if you will.

We just see the homeless epidemic just—you can come visit Portland and I invite you all to do so and other cities in my State and it's a graphic display of the challenge we face.

So in terms, Madam Secretary, of the Housing Trust Fund, is supporting a regular annual investment in the Housing Trust Fund on the order of $45 billion a possibility?

Secretary FUDGE. I'm so happy to say that two out of the three are already in this Jobs Plan and the third one is $40 billion as opposed to 70, but I think that we are very much on track and the President and his team have put together what I think is an outstanding proposal, and it is $45 billion.

WARM SPRINGS TRIBE

Senator MERKLEY. That's just terrific, and I know we need to fight to maintain that as we go through the process.

Finally, with my last minute, I want to turn to water infrastructure. I'm glad to see the addressing lead pipes and the PFAS and WIFIA, a program I worked to create here in the Senate, Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act, but I want to address now what I hear from my small towns in Oregon and from my Tribes, including the Warm Springs Tribe, which is that their communities are too small to support the investments in clean water and wastewater treatment required for commerce and expansion required to repair old systems, required to meet new standards, and they are just perplexed on how they can get there.

And so what I want to know on their behalf, can the Warm Springs Tribe, can our small towns and cities count on significant grant funds to be able to basically rebuild their decrepit clean water supply and wastewater treatment and so I'm turning to Administrator Regan in this regard.

Mr. REGAN. Yes, they can anticipate grant funding and loans as well as more technical support from the agency to help them put the best applications forward so that we can deploy those assets.

Senator MERKLEY. Great. That technical support is important and I have a provision that is, I think, included in the general work we're doing right now which is a circuit rider plan to provide really experts to assist these small towns because they look at the complexity of these systems. So that's great. But they keep telling me the loans are too much. They won't be able to repay them. They can't sell them politically. They need grant help to help build these systems when you're talking towns of under 10,000. It's just a huge per person almost an impossible burden.

Mr. REGAN. Yes, some will qualify for loans, some will qualify for grants, some can qualify for both, and we'll take a look. I'd love to spend some time——

Senator MERKLEY. I'm going to be advocating for a whole list of communities that I have with me now, but I'll be following up with you.

Thank you very much.

Mr. REGAN. Sounds good.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

I see Senator Braun is here. Go ahead, Senator.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Infrastructure. I can't think of anything that should have more bipartisan support. Coming from the State of Indiana where we actually had the political will in 2017 to not only talk about infrastructure, got, I think, 47 to 48 out of 50 stakeholders. One of them, myself, at the time as an owner of a trucking and distribution company that thought it made sense if we were going to spend money and that we could keep it devoted to infrastructure, as most of us understand, roads and bridges, maybe waterways, air, rail, then it makes sense to do so.

I think a question came up earlier and I was just off a conversation a moment ago with concrete folks across the country. They're obviously interested in infrastructure and they were more concerned actually what we're going to do on an annual ongoing basis with the transportation bill.

I think earlier the question was asked is that going to be addressed in this larger bill, and, Secretary Buttigieg, I think the answer was probably not. I just want to know the reason why we're not tackling that for that dependability and reliability that most are looking for not only with one big flurry of spending.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, thank you, Senator, for the chance to explain. So we view both of these things moving in parallel.

What I'm trying to convey is that the American Jobs Plan, which is conceived as a once-in-a-generation, perhaps once-in-a-lifetime investment in the things that we need both in terms of things like transportation infrastructure, care infrastructure, and housing infrastructure to succeed and compete in the future need to be done on a one-time basis.

But, of course, we also have the ongoing needs for transportation that are contemplated in the surface bills and so the Jobs Plan was crafted in such a way that these investments make sense in a world where the highway or surface bills, as we know them, whether they're reauthorized as we hope or extended or something else, that those could fit together.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. Also vividly remember in 2017 how 70 percent of Hoosiers wanted better roads and bridges. In an enterprising State like ours, 70 percent didn't want their taxes to go up. So we tackled that, as well, and did sell it mostly to the business community, which is less regressive when diesel taxes go up. We haven't touched fuel taxes since 1993. To me, that's a lack of political will.

Most stakeholders are willing to pay more, especially to where it wouldn't be as regressive on the diesel side of it, but what about public-private partnerships? What about something we did uniquely of giving more Federal dollars to States that are willing to pay more?

I'd like any witness to jump in on those two. The private sector, we've got clean balance sheets. There's a lot of potential there. Government doesn't have to do all of it itself through the Federal level.

So talk about your comfort zone with public-private partnerships and other creative ways of paying for it, given the kind of ugly-looking balance sheet we've got currently.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. I'll defer to my colleagues for their views. I'd simply reiterate that we certainly see that as part of the bigger picture on transportation.

Mr. REGAN. We definitely see that as part of the solution with $111 billion in the American Jobs Plan for water infrastructure. We recognize that the government can't do it alone. There are $743 billion worth of needs in this country. So it will take some creativity, entrepreneurship and public-private partnerships to close that gap.

Secretary RAIMONDO. I agree, and earlier we spoke about the semiconductor fund which I think is vital. There's no way $50 billion is enough. We hope to turn the $50 billion into three or four times that, leveraging public-private partnerships and public-private investment.

Secretary FUDGE. We're actually already doing it with the rental assistance demonstration project. So it's something that we're familiar with.

Senator BRAUN. Okay. And a trickier subject, would you be willing to reward enterprising States that got the capital capacity to get more Federal dollars if they put a higher percentage of their own skin in the game? Go ahead, anyone.

Secretary RAIMONDO. I'll go first. I think, look, the President's been very clear. Let's get bipartisan support and let's look for areas of compromise. I will say, as a former Governor until about a month ago, I think that's very interesting. Here at Commerce, we'll be investing the EDA funds and we are thinking of doing, as has been done in the past, a competition.

We certainly want States to put skin in the game. So I think it's something worth discussion.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you. I think the Senator raises a very interesting question. If we are going to treat the different States differently, we are going to have to have legislation, in all likelihood, to do that. But that is something we should consider. I mean, the Senate ought to be spending some time legislating.

Now we have Senator Baldwin, who is joining us remotely.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Chairman LEAHY. There she is.

BUY AMERICA

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you to our witnesses.

I am really pleased that the American Jobs Plan intends to create good jobs by requiring that materials used in the construction of infrastructure are made in America. I recently introduced bipartisan legislation with my Republican colleague, who was just speaking, the Made in American Act, to require that all Federal programs that fund or finance infrastructure projects use materials manufactured in the U.S.

The bill touches programs that each one of you is charged with enforcing, but I'd like to ask each witness if you would support applying these Buy America provisions to programs administered by your agencies.

Please answer yes or no if you can. Secretary Fudge, would you support adding Buy America provisions to the materials used in construction funded or financed by the Public Housing Capital Fund and the Community Development Block Grant?

Secretary FUDGE. Yes.

Senator BALDWIN. Administrator Regan, would you support adding Buy America provisions to materials used in construction funded or financed by the Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act, the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund?

Mr. REGAN. Yes.

Senator BALDWIN. Secretary Buttigieg, would you support adding Buy America provisions to the materials used in construction funded or financed by the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Yes.

Senator BALDWIN. And, lastly, Secretary Raimondo, my legislation requires the Commerce Secretary to set uniform standards that maximize the jobs created in the U.S. by this requirement.

Do you agree that more manufacturing processes occurring in the U.S. translates into more American jobs?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Yes, absolutely.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, all.

Secretaries Buttigieg and Raimondo, I am pleased that the American Jobs Plan will make our infrastructure more resilient to extreme weather and the effects of climate change by investing $50 billion to improve infrastructure resilience and ensure that we build back better.

After years of touring flood damage across the State of Wisconsin, this is a high priority for me. This week, I will be reintroducing my bipartisan Rebuilding Stronger Infrastructure Act to update the Emergency Relief Program at the Department of Transportation.

I'm also reintroducing my bipartisan Built to Last Act to ensure that the Department of Commerce is supporting building codes that make the best use of our climate data and our best climate data.

I'd like to ask each of you to talk about why this is so critical to place resiliency at the center of this once-in-a-generation infrastructure investment, and I'll start with Secretary Buttigieg.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, thank you. We view it as extremely important to make sure as we're making especially these potentially once-in-a-lifetime or once-in-a-generation investments that they be done with resilience in mind.

Of course, we're already incorporating that into our discretionary work as much as the existing statute can allow for but believe it needs to be even more central on the road ahead and it's why we're talking not only about fix it first but fix it right.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you. Secretary Raimondo.

Secretary RAIMONDO. Yes, thank you. Thank you for the question.

As we have discussed, resiliency is vital and Commerce can play a very important role with NIST and NOAA and collecting the technical data necessary to define resilience and ensure that that is incorporated into all the work that we do.

So it will be exciting to work with you on the legislation and to implement it.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, and, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator.

And next we have Senator Chris Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Vice Chairman. Thank you all for enduring a long hearing but an important one.

Secretary Buttigieg, the distance between Beijing and Shanghai is about twice as long as the distance between Boston and Washington and so suffice it to say it would be embarrassing if the amount of time it took to travel between our Nation's Capital and the city of Boston was the same as it takes to travel between those two major Asian capitals.

In fact, it's worse than that. It takes about four and a half hours to get from Beijing to Shanghai via train. It takes about 7 hours today to get from Boston to Washington.

To make these even worse, we're not getting faster, we're getting slower. This morning, I checked a time table from Bridgeport to New York City. Right now, it's about 89 minutes on average. You can get a train a couple minutes faster if it doesn't make as many stops.

In 1963, it was 74 minutes. We're getting slower, not faster, and so I'm grateful for the focus in this plan on Amtrak generally and Northeast Rail. I know Senator Coons asked some questions about this, as well.

But we've got this tremendous backlog of state of good repair projects. I want to just make sure that our goal here is not just to fix what's broken but to actually improve performance, improve experience. Is that the underlying goal of our project here with Amtrak funding, transit funding, and specifically Northeast Rail funding?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Yes, we're not going to all this trouble just in hopes of remaining 13th in infrastructure globally. This is about looking after what we have and making sure we get better.

Senator MURPHY. And so then let me ask you this question. How do we make sure that in a rail system that has a fairly complicated existing financing structure, you've got commuter rail systems, you've got State-financed portions of the rail, Amtrak's putting in money and the Federal Government's putting in money, how do we make sure that this Federal investment doesn't become an excuse for States or for commuter rail to not put in their own skin? How do we make sure that we leverage a substantial investment in rail, in particular Northeast Rail, in a way that provokes States to do more, not do less?

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Thank you. It's a welcome reminder of the challenge of making sure that every player is doing their part and to that regard, I would point not only to the funds in the American Jobs Plan but also in our discretionary budget request this year calling for a PRIME. I can't remember what it stands for, other than that the P and the R are for Passenger Rail, but to reward and encourage those local and other bodies that are stepping up.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Chairman, I would just recommend to this committee and to others that are working on this, you know, that we take some time to make sure that we are offering a proposal here that prompts other entities to put increased resources into the pool, as well, because even if you take the $80 billion for Amtrak and assume that, you know, half of it goes to the Northeast Rail Corridor, that just covers state of good repair. That literally just fixes the parts that are broke. That repairs the bridge in Connecticut that was built during the Grover Cleveland Administration, but it doesn't necessarily get you even back to 1963 travel time. So I think that's a really worthy project for us to undertake.

Secretary Raimondo, staying on this topic, you've got obviously unique expertise to leverage here because you were Governor of a State on the Northeast Rail Corridor.

So two questions for you. One, what ideas, if any, do you have about how to leverage States to put skin in the game here and to not just replace their spending with Federal spending, and, two, you know, from a Commerce standpoint, how important is it as we're marketing America to be able to say that we are attacking this issue of travel times between major Eastern Seaboard capitals that are again expanding rather than decreasing?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Thank you for your question. Nice to see you, neighbor from Connecticut.

Senator MURPHY. Good to see you.

Secretary RAIMONDO. It's vitally important. I spent an awful lot of time as Governor trying to convince companies to locate in or expand in Rhode Island and inevitably the number one question was how's the airport and tell me about the infrastructure. Trains are a key part of that.

So in any event, I would just say it is absolutely vitally important. Businesses want to be and people want to live in places with first-class infrastructure and that's broadly defined as broadband, water, bike paths, rail, roads, airports, and et cetera.

I will say that in the rescue package, which was fantastic and thank you for taking action, States do have money available on account of that and I think we need to be innovative in how we encourage them to make some of that money and other money available to put against Federal investments. Again, if we could take a dollar and turn it into two or three, that maximizes the investment.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you very much.

And Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all of you, appreciate you very much and your commitment to public service.

I appreciate all of you being here today but I truly do find it a little bit odd that Secretary Granholm is not with us, given the Department of Energy will likely have——

Chairman LEAHY. I would note for the Senator we have invited the ones we have had time for. We've already gone an hour over with those. Secretary Granholm is going to be scheduled to be before the committee as will the other members of the Cabinet.

Senator MANCHIN. That's great because the American Jobs calls for a $180 billion of investment in research and development. So we'll get to her when she does come here. So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for that.

Department of Energy is very instrumental and very integral to this whole process and we have to coordinate it.

Secretary Raimondo, I've long said that in the 1930s my grandparents didn't have electricity. Most Rural Americans didn't and Rural West Virginians, and FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt) gets elected and before you have rural electrification, they were able to basically take a line of every hollow and every little nook and cranny in America to make sure when it was connected for the convenience and, I guess, for the 20th Century infrastructure it was needed.

I find it really, really challenging now in the 21st Century infrastructure of Internet and broadband connectivity, it's about the same as electricity was back in the 1930s and still yet we haven't been able to unlock this for some reason.

I've said if you look at the model that was put together in the 20th Century, early 20th Century, using co-ops to go up in areas where you could not force the large public companies to go because they would lose money, there's not enough activity, the co-ops weren't profit-driven or profit-motive, why can't we use that same model that was used to basically get up in all these very difficult, challenging areas because Appalachia—if Appalachia is left behind and you will have more poverty than you've ever seen before.

Secretary RAIMONDO. Yes. We're not going to let that happen. You know, the President is very clear we want this Jobs Plan and the $100 billion called for is to ensure that 100 percent of Americans, including those in Appalachia, have high-speed affordable broadband and the Jobs Plan is very clear that we're going to provide the grants and the money to the entities in the best position to provide the service, including nonprofits, co-ops, and municipal entities, just like you've said.

There's no one size fits all and so we will consult with the community, and I promise you we will make sure that nobody's left behind.

Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Buttigieg, Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty in 1964, 1964. Appalachia was isolated from much of the country and if it wasn't for 1960 election where John Kennedy campaigned in West Virginia and made that basically his mantra to bring in interstates, we weren't going to get interstates in Appalachia. We wouldn't have had anything and he made that happen.

But I will say this. The system is 90 percent complete which is the Appalachian Development Highway System that was to build 3,090 miles of roads. It's 90 percent complete. This last 284 miles is the toughest of all and it's not supposed to be done until 2040 and we've got parts that are isolated and getting further behind because of the transition from the coal communities.

So I'm hoping that the President made it very clear, President Biden, he wants to make sure that we leave nobody behind. Those areas that we have to bring to your attention need to be accelerated. If not, it will not get done for the next 20 years. So I don't know if you have been brought up to speed on ARC or Appalachian Highway Corridors and all that.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. I appreciate your raising that. I've had one great interaction with ARC and will certainly take that back and learn more about the progress of that effort.

Senator MANCHIN. My final one is to all of you, whoever wants to answer it. You all have proven track record, all of you, all of you got confirmed with really good bipartisan vote, which is a tremendous feat in today's toxic atmosphere. So I want to congratulate each and every one of you. That was tremendous.

So yesterday on the Floor of the Senate, Leader Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader, said we're seeing that when the Senate is given the opportunity to work, the Senate can work. That's something I very much agree with, as you know. So we have to end this on a positive note.

What piece of your portion of this infrastructure plan do you believe seems to have the most bipartisan support? We'll just start and go right down the line. Well, let's start over here. Marcia, let's start.

Secretary FUDGE. I think the part of the housing piece that has the most bipartisan support is to bring up to code existing properties. You know, we have some 9,400 units that most of them need updating and to find a way to bridge the gap between the rising cost of housing and affordable housing.

Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Raimondo.

Secretary RAIMONDO. The $50 billion CHIPS (Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors) Act investment into semiconductors.

Senator MANCHIN. What you're hearing is basically good bipartisan?

Secretary RAIMONDO. I'm sorry?

Senator MANCHIN. It has bipartisan support, you think, from all the people you're talking to?

Secretary RAIMONDO. Yes.

Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Regan.

Mr. REGAN. I believe the water infrastructure portion of the bill.

Senator MANCHIN. Water?

Mr. REGAN. Water infrastructure, wastewater, stormwater, lead pipes, although we're going to work for all of that that have bipartisan support.

Senator MANCHIN. Secretary Pete.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Well, certainly our surface transportation needs I think are well understood, but I also love being part of a package that's popular in its individual pieces as well as in its totality.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you. I thank the Senator from West Virginia who also has the experience of having dealt with these kinds of issues as Governor, as well.

Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's great to see all of you here today to talk about the American Jobs Plan.

We've been talking about modernizing our infrastructure around here for a long time. So I'm glad we're finally moving forward to do it and not just modernizing our 20th Century infrastructure and updating it for the 21st but developing the 21st Century infrastructure and building more jobs along with that.

There's a lot to cover. I just want to mention a couple things to each of you that I look forward to working with you on. Broadband's been mentioned. We need to build out 100 percent broadband.

Before the pandemic, we were talking about closing the homework gap, kids who couldn't access the Internet for homework. Now it's a full-blown learning gap and we need to connect everybody everywhere.

Secretary Fudge, on the affordable housing front, pleased to see the infrastructure piece here. I also saw your budget. You called for another 200,000 affordable housing vouchers. Just want to point out that Senator Young and I have bipartisan legislation to establish 500,000 affordable housing vouchers to help families move to areas of greater opportunities, something that has a proven track record of success.

Administrator Regan, the water and sewers are important for clean drinking water and, of course, protecting water bodies, like the Chesapeake Bay, and it's not in your jurisdiction, but I've been working for years to establish a clean energy accelerator to do public-private partnerships to unleash the power of a clean energy economy. Look forward to working with all of you on that.

There's $40 billion in the American Jobs Plan for that. Senator Merkley and I have a plan, a hundred billion, but we want to work in that direction to get it done.

Community development, Secretary Raimondo, we spoke during your confirmation process about legislation we've introduced to build on community development efforts, especially in Baltimore. As part of the American Rescue Plan, as you know, we had $3 billion for EDA (Economic Development Administration).

I see in this Jobs Plan you identify EDA as a source of funds for additional infrastructure and you want to lift the cap, the $3 million cap, all good. There's not a number specified. I do think that's a flexible funding source that I hope to work with you on to really boost that as part of the plan. Again, I don't see any dollar figure associated with it, but I can tell you in places like Baltimore City, those funds can go a very long way. So I look forward to working with you on that.

Secretary Buttigieg, transit, we're seeing not just major systems, like WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority), which is important to make sure the Federal Government keeps going by bringing Federal employees to and from work, but the Maryland Legislature just a few days ago passed authorization for a regional transit system connecting Prince George's County to counties in Southern Maryland, hugely congested area.

Those more regional transit projects have sort of been left behind and overlooked in the past. So look forward to working with you on that as we also repair our roads and bridges.

And, finally, Secretary Buttigieg, I just want you to expand on this. There are funds in here to take down some of the infrastructure put in places in years past that actually divided communities and was really based on a legacy of segregation and racial discrimination.

There's what we call a "highway to nowhere" in Baltimore City. In the process of beginning that highway, 900 homes were taken and demolished in an African American neighborhood. The road was finally stopped because of opposition from East Baltimore, the whiter communities, but the damage had already been done in these African American communities in West Baltimore. It's a scar running through the city.

So just yesterday, Senators Carper and Cardin and I and many others introduced a bill. It's part of your plan to make livable communities.

Can you just elaborate on that? There's some that say, wow, you have an infrastructure bill and you're actually using some of those funds to take down infrastructure. These are sort of things that were done in the past that are actually making it harder for communities to come together and succeed.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Yes, thank you for the chance to speak to that and first to acknowledge your leadership and that of Senator Carper and others in making sure that there is legislation and work around what it would take to deliver greater equity.

Too often our highway infrastructure and road infrastructure came in a very inequitable fashion not just in terms of who was left out but in terms of people finding their neighborhoods destroyed or divided by things like the placement of a roadway and I should add sometimes perhaps out of neglect because it was the path of least resistance. Sometimes it was even worse, being viewed deliberately as a means for clearing, quote unquote, an undesirable area or enforcing a pattern of segregation between one side of a highway and another.

And so we do need to pay attention to how we can use resources to reconnect what has been divided, especially when those divisions happened through the use of Federal dollars at a previous time.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Appreciate that. Look forward to working with you, Mr. Secretary, and all of you on these issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEAHY. Thank you.

And our last Senator, not least, the newest member of the committee—and also I would note, the member who has spent the most time here today of either party listening to what I think has been a very informative meeting—Senator Heinrich.

Senator HEINRICH. It has been informative, Chairman, and I'm grateful that you didn't start the clock on me early. So I'll try and get to as many questions as I can.

First, I want to say something about sort of the debt conversation we heard from some of my colleagues earlier. You know, one of the things I learned sitting on a city council in Albuquerque was that deferred maintenance is debt and what I mean by that is if you have to go to the rating agencies and say, oh, you should give us a great bond rating because we're going to stop spending money on our roads, stop spending money on our water infrastructure, stop spending money on our parks, they will tell you that deferred maintenance is debt and they will look very skeptically on that.

We've been deferring maintenance in this country for decades now. We are under-investing in infrastructure. I think the Chairman said we're putting about 2.3 percent of GDP into infrastructure. That's not even competitive.

The Ranking Member said it well. He said we have a lot of crumbling infrastructure in this country. That is not something we should be proud of.

So our current commitment to infrastructure has more in common with Belarus at 2.1 percent than it does with China at 5.6 percent, and I think the reason why we're having this hearing is because we all know that we need to change that.'

Secretary Raimondo, is broadband infrastructure?

Secretary RAIMONDO. I believe it is, yes.

METHANE

Senator HEINRICH. I don't think there's a single person I've met in New Mexico who questions that and yet that is part of the conversation as we go into discussing this American Jobs Plan.

It is the information highway. I mean, this is the infrastructure of our time, and I very much appreciate what you said about reaching out to Tribal communities and to focusing on the unserved before we increase capacity in existing served areas.

Administrator Regan, methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas, as you know. It's the primary constituent in natural gas, and oil and gas production is the largest emitter of fugitive methane in the United States.

So fixing methane leaks and capturing wasted emissions from oil and gas infrastructure is a big potential win-win for the economy, for the climate. How might the American Jobs Plan help stop methane emissions while at the same time creating place-based good-paying jobs?

Mr. REGAN. Well, it positions us to partner with organizations, like the American Petroleum Institute and Edison Electric, who are calling for methane regulations. I think we'll use these resources to capitalize on the advanced technologies that we have at our fingertips right now to quantify methane emissions and significantly reduce those emissions while looking at those technologies available to our international partners all around the world.

Senator HEINRICH. Yes. I know my colleague from Louisiana said how important it is to model these things. Actually, the Energy Futures Initiative has modeled the impact that just regulating and capturing methane would produce to reducing global warming and it is one of the most powerful things that we can do.

In addition, Administrator, electrifying our homes by installing energy efficient things like heat pumps, induction stoves, is one way for each of us to take immediate and long-lasting action on the climate crisis.

The added benefit of that is that indoor air pollution from combustion is a huge problem. Many people don't realize that there are many homes in this country where if the indoor air quality were outdoors, it wouldn't meet the Clean Air Act.

At the same time, we can manufacture those things right here in the United States. So talk to me about what in the American Jobs Plan and with your agencies can help Americans electrify more of their homes while cleaning up indoor air quality, literally saving lives from things like asthma attacks and creating local installation jobs.

Mr. REGAN. Well, we have a significant amount of experience with indoor air quality at EPA as well as looking at more efficient appliances within our homes via our Energy STAR Program.

I think the American Jobs Plan sets up an excellent opportunity for the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy to quantify the ability to deploy technologies, reduce emissions, quantify those health benefits, while, just as you say, put lots of Americans to work.

Senator HEINRICH. Finally, Secretary Buttigieg, I was really glad to see the American Jobs Plan's proposals to build out the national network of charging infrastructure by 2030. This is a really important transition we're in the midst of, but I want to make sure that there is adequate focus on rural States, like New Mexico, where in many cases the map right now makes it very hard for my constituents in rural areas to utilize those kinds of advanced solutions.

Secretary BUTTIGIEG. Yes, we think this is especially important to consider, that it's often in rural and more spread-out States where Americans would have the most to gain from the fuel savings associated with electric vehicles, but it doesn't do you any good if you can't get charged on those longer distances and that's why we believe the electric charging infrastructure is such an important part of this vision and is absolutely being done with regard to those rural and less dense areas.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you for your patience, Mr. Chair.

Chairman LEAHY. Not at all. The questions that have been asked have been excellent. I want to thank everybody, the Senators who came but especially the witnesses, and the staff on both sides of the aisle who worked so hard to put together a meaningful hearing.

You know, I could not help but think—and I will close with this—the American Society of Engineers have given our roads a grade of D, our bridges a grade of C, stormwater and wastewater systems D and D+, drinking water C−. We talked about our energy grids, our student populations have outgrown our schools.

Obviously we have to do something about broadband. The American Society of Civil Engineers says 65 percent of counties in America have connection speeds less than what they would call broadband. One in five school-aged children lack high-speed Internet connection.

When I was growing up, you assumed you turned the light switch on, the house lights would come on. Today, you assume you will have an Internet connection. So we have got to build safer, stronger, and sounder.

We talk about the climate crisis. It is real, and we have a part as do all other countries, but if we do not do our part, how are we going to go to other countries and tell them to get onboard and do their part? We know what is happening to our electrical grids. We have got to invest in people, research and development, and I think this Jobs Plan speaks to it.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

So I will keep the hearing record open for a week. If there are written questions to submit, I would ask everybody to do it by 5 p.m. next Tuesday, April 27.

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the Department for response subsequent to the hearing:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SECRETARY PETE BUTTIGIEG

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

RURAL VILLAGES AND TOWNS

Question. I want to return to the main theme of my opening remarks today: the challenges of rural America. The average town in Vermont has 1,200 people and leadership that is almost all volunteers with full time jobs. These towns are ready to make the investments to update their water, their sewer, their roads, and their zoning and build more housing, and attract young families and new small businesses. But, doing so is a bureaucratic maze. The American Jobs Plan is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for every part of our country.

Secretary Buttigieg: In your former life, you were the mayor of a "small" town. That town's population is a little less one-sixth the population of the entire state of Vermont. I know you understand the challenges of accessing these federal resources, to better improve the lives of constituents, and strengthen our towns.

How can the Department of Transportation—and indeed all agencies across government—support rural places and small towns in this infrastructure plan? How can we ensure that this funding benefits everyone in the country, not just cities that have already been able to invest in the requirements for shovel-ready projects?

Answer. I understand that rural communities and small towns have unique needs, including resource challenges and extensive unmet maintenance. I also know that infrastructure investments in rural America are key to supporting economic growth and to ensuring that residents have access to jobs, education, and essential basic services like health care.

As you know, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) codifies the ROUTES initiative, but this work is already underway. Specifically, DOT is developing a comprehensive rural strategy to ensure that we incorporate rural considerations into all the programs that can benefit these communities. I want to make sure that rural America benefits from the Administration's focus on safety, economic strength and modernization, equity, and climate and sustainability. We are developing roundtables and other opportunities to engage with rural stakeholders to understand their priorities, and to ensure that they are heard by the Department. Our approach will increase access to Department resources for rural communities, including funding and financing programs, technical assistance, and will integrate the priorities of rural America into each DOT program that affects rural transportation. We are also partnering with other Federal agencies that have a rural infrastructure portfolio—especially United States Department of Agriculture—to make sure that rural project sponsors can combine federal infrastructure funding and financing programs in the most advantageous way possible.

BUS & BUS FACILITIES

Question. Replacing public buses remains a critical capital need in Vermont. Currently, there are over 100 buses in the state that need to be replaced. The state continues to make progress in repairing and replacing their bus fleet, however, cost remains an issue, with the price of diesel buses doubling and collection of fare revenues declining.

What is the administration's plan for ensuring smaller, more rural states like Vermont—which are not able to cover their repair and replace expenses through fare collections—are able to maintain and improve their public bus lines?

Answer. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides a generational investment in public transit, that will help many communities support their existing transit systems. This includes funding for the Bus & Bus Facilities formula and competitive programs, as well as the Low or No Emission Vehicle competitive program. This program provides funding to state and local governmental authorities for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and low-emission transit buses as well as the acquisition, construction, and leasing of required supporting facilities.

FTA has awarded $409 million for these types of projects since the program began in 2016.

RURAL EV CHARGING STATIONS

Question. Vermont has been rapidly expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure throughout the state, primarily through a combination of settlement funds from an international auto-manufacturer and state transportation funds. Vermont currently leads the nation in per capita electric vehicle supply equipment deployment and ranks among the top states in electric vehicle market penetration and electric vehicle policy support. In order to continue this expansion, the state will need Federal support, especially when it comes to the development of electric vehicle charging stations off of Interstates 89 & 91.

One of the primary tenets of the transportation infrastructure portion of the American Jobs Plan involves creating good jobs by electrifying vehicles. This includes a plan to establish grant and incentive programs for state and local governments and the private sector to build a national network of 500,000 electric vehicle chargers by 2030. How does the administration plan on ensuring rural areas such as Vermont receive their fair share when it comes to electric vehicle charging stations? What about for areas that are not directly connected to the Federal Interstate System?

Answer. DOT recognizes that rural areas are at risk of being left out of the major advances occurring in electric vehicle (EV) technology. EV infrastructure is expanding quickly, but the growth is concentrated in urban areas and along major highways. However, EV technologies will bring significant benefits to rural areas by reducing driving costs, generating economic development opportunities from attracting EV drivers to rural destinations, and in the future potentially improving resiliency with vehicle to grid (V2G) battery storage.

DOT is working with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and other Federal agencies to deliver on President Biden's priorities, which includes a transformational investment in clean transportation infrastructure. Through a combination of grant and incentive programs for state and local governments and the private sector, this investment will support a transformational acceleration in deployment of a mix of chargers in apartment buildings, in public parking, throughout communities, and as a robust fast charging network along our nation's roadways. The type of electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) would vary depending on the installation location and its core users. Specifically, the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation will offer technical assistance to Vermont and other states to ensure the investments in charging result in a National network of EV chargers that is convenient, reliable, affordable, accessible, and equitable. In April 2021, DOT's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced guidance[1] on how federal funds can be used to deploy charging infrastructure and newly designated alternative fuel corridors.

DOT has also published a Rural EV Infrastructure Toolkit, which provides user-friendly information to rural project sponsors—both public and private—on how to plan, fund, and implement charging stations in rural areas. It provides information on the full range of federal funding sources that can be used for EV infrastructure—not just from DOT, but also from agencies with a particular focus on rural development, such as USDA, and electric vehicles, such as DOE. It builds on FHWA's guidance and on ongoing efforts such as FHWA's Alternative Fuel Corridors.

RAIL

Question. One transportation section of the American Jobs Plan focuses on the need to invest in reliable passenger and freight rail service specifically referencing the modernization of the high-traffic Northeast Corridor.

What is the Administration's plan to modernize the Acela Corridor and how will those plans impact rail lines that are tangentially-connected but not considered a high-traffic line in the more rural areas of the northeast region?

Answer. Successful economies demand safe, efficient, and effective transportation systems. For more than 50 years, our government invested hundreds of billions of dollars in the development of the interstate highway and aviation systems, but minimal amounts in rail. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will offer a generational investment in our nation's rail network. The IIJA includes $66 billion in advance appropriations, and up to $34 billion in additional authorized funding to enhance, expand, and modernize the Northeast Corridor; develop new

[1] https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/alternative__fuel__corridors/resources/ev__funding__report__2021.pdf

and improved intercity passenger rail routes; address Amtrak's backlog of equipment, stations, and deferred capital projects, and enhance safety at highway-rail grade crossings.

Since the passage of the FAST Act in 2017, we have seen a growing interest in FRA's discretionary grant programs including the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) and the Federal-State Partnership for the State of Good Repair (Partnership) grant programs. BIL expands FRA's existing grant programs and creates a process under the Corridor Identification and Development program, enabling states, local communities, and other rail stakeholders to comprehensively identify and develop new or expanded passenger rail corridors.

Question. A key rail priority for Vermont is ensuring all of Vermont's rail lines have access to the national rail network. Does the administration's rail plan share the goal of ensuring all rail lines in the United States are connect to the national rail network? If so, what plans are in place to achieve this goal?

Answer. The IIJA will make the largest Federal investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak, for states, railroads, and other stakeholders to improve, modernize, and expand the Nation's rail network. The IIJA includes $66 billion in advance appropriations, and up to $34 billion in additional authorized funding to enhance, expand, and modernize the Northeast Corridor; develop new and improved intercity passenger rail routes; address Amtrak's backlog of equipment, stations, and deferred capital projects, and enhance safety at highway-rail grade crossings.

Specifically, FRA received $12 billion for the Federal-State Partnership grants to expand or establish new intercity passenger projects outside of the Northeast Corridor, as well as at least $5 billion for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program. The proposed investment will benefit intercity passenger and freight railroads alike, not just by maintaining safe and reliable railroad infrastructure and developing new corridors to increase capacity and network performance, but also by providing new locomotives, advanced research with important safety and operational applications, and necessary workforce development programs to train the next generation of railroaders.

TIMBER BRIDGES

Question. The current cost of rehabilitating our national backlog of structurally-deficient bridges is $125 billion, and in Vermont alone there is a deferred backlog of over $838 million in maintenance and repair. As with many states, there is an acute need for bridge repair in Vermont. As the United States looks to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases coming from the transportation sector, mass timber products can offer one solution. Timber products can help mitigate climate change. The Federal Highway Administration has a long history of partnering with the USDA Forest Products Laboratory and National Park Service for research and development on timber bridges, but in recent years these collaborations have slowed. Continued improvements in the fabrication of cross laminated timber (CLT) and other types of mass timber have increased this materials usefulness in the construction of bridges. Use of CLT is productive for both construction projects, for local, rural economies, and for the environment. Many state agencies of transportation are unaware of the possible utilizations of timber products in bridge construction and a renewed focus and investment by Federal Highway Administration will help stimulate this struggling market.

The President's American Jobs Plan calls for $115 billion to modernize our bridges, highways, roads, and main streets that are in the most critical need of repair, including funding to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Timber bridges could be an environmentally-friendly & cost-effective way to help repair our Nation's bridges. Will you commit to looking into utilizing the Timber Bridge Program as a way to improve bridges across the country?

Answer. Yes, I commit to looking into utilizing timber as a way to improve bridges across the country. The Nation faces a trillion-dollar backlog of needed repairs and we have fallen to 13th in the world in infrastructure-that is not sustainable as a global leader. The Administration, through IIJA, seeks to modernize bridges, highways, roads, and main streets that are in most critical need of repair. It will fix the most economically significant large bridges in the country in need of reconstruction, and it will repair the worst smaller bridges, including bridges that provide critical connections to rural and tribal communities.

ELECTRIC AIRCRAFTS

Question. Advanced air mobility is the emergence of transformative airborne technology to transport people and cargo in a cost-effective aircraft in previously unserved or underserved rural and urban areas. The emerging use of advance air mobility technology, including electronic aircrafts, can have a revolutionary effect on the delivery of services and care amid natural disasters or crises. It could serve as a possible cost-effective alternative to air ambulances; a quick, safe mode of transportation for organ transplants are just two examples of how advanced air mobility technology is becoming the future of the aviation industry. The advanced air mobility market is still untapped, even at the international level. The country that develops its domestic advanced air mobility capabilities and is the first to produce quality advanced air mobility products that are safe, accessible, secure and readily available at scale could very well emerge as the global leader in this technology.

When considering how best to improve our Nation's aviation infrastructure, is the Biden administration looking into advanced air mobility, specifically the use of electric aircrafts, as a means to which the US can continue to be a global leader in the aerospace field? How can Congress support these efforts?

Answer. The first passenger-carrying Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) aircraft are currently working their way through Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certification. The FAA has been collaborating with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to develop AAM Concepts of Operation, engaging with industry, and participating in demonstration projects that are opening our eyes to how AAM could fundamentally change the air transportation system as we know it. There is still a lot we need to learn to prepare for initial AAM operations that extends beyond the development of the aircraft itself. The FAA has organized its efforts around five areas of focus, which include aircraft, airspace, operations, infrastructure, and community.

The first AAM operations are projected to be piloted, use traditional air traffic management services, and travel along established visual flight rules routes. These initial operations may quickly ramp up to require complex navigation systems, flight plan coordination, passenger security considerations, autonomous operation rules and procedures, and standards for landing sites, such as where they are placed; how they are funded and operated; and how they accommodate multiple or a single operator's aircraft. We are actively working with intergovernmental partners, industry, states, local communities, and tribal governments to better understand this emerging technology. I will be happy to share our progress in this field as it develops.

FEDERAL COST SHARES & RURAL SET-ASIDES

Question. One issue I continuously hear from stakeholders in Vermont is about the need to make Federal programs more accessible to rural areas. One hindrance to these critical resources are Federal cost share rates. It is much more difficult for small, more rural areas to raise the funds necessary to meet various federal cost share requirements, especially for transportation and economic development programs. Another issue at hand is inexperience or inability to fulfill grant writing requirements due to a lack of resources at the community-level. Grant writing is not always the simplest task, especially when the median town size is only 1,200 people.

There a number of ways to incentivize rural participation in Federal grant programs whether it be higher Federal cost shares, navigator programs, or rural set-asides for specific Federal programs. Is the Biden administration supportive of raising Federal cost share matching requirements and implementing rural-set asides as a means to make Federal grant programs more accessible to rural communities across the country?

Answer. I understand that rural communities have unique needs, including resource challenges and extensive unmet maintenance. I also know that infrastructure investments in rural America are key to supporting economic growth and to ensuring that residents have access to jobs, education and essential basic services like health care.

Rural set-asides and higher Federal share for rural projects can be effective tools for getting Federal resources to rural areas, and where statute allows it, the Department implements these tools in a number of programs. For instance, the RAISE program has a statutory requirement to award an equitable amount, not to exceed 50%, to both urban and rural projects. It also allows rural projects to be funded up to 100% of project costs, which is not the case for urban projects. For the INFRA program, in 2021, the Department awarded approximately 44% of INFRA funding to projects in rural areas, well above the statutory requirement of 25%.

Moreover, we have implemented such provisions in more than just our grant programs. Rural projects can access interest rates at half the typical rate (which means an interest rate just under 1%) through the TIFIA Rural Project Initiative, and receive a loan for 49% of eligible project costs, whereas other projects top out at 33% of eligible project costs. The remaining funding often comes from other DOT formula and discretionary programs, and we encourage applicants to leverage all sources of federal funds with a TIFIA loan to bring their project to fruition.

Finally, I also recognize the need to provide technical assistance to help rural project sponsors apply for grants, which is why the Department's ROUTES program is dedicated to providing user-friendly guides and information to help rural stakeholders navigate DOT grant programs and resources.

CROSS-BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE

Question. For many states that neighbor the northern border, such as Vermont, the continued exchanged of international commerce with Canada remains a critical priority when considering how best to increase economic opportunities for these regions. Whether it is the free flow of commerce between Burlington, Vermont, and Montreal, Canada; Detroit, Michigan, and Toronto; or Seattle, Washington, and Vancouver, these regions all have the opportunity to revitalize their local economies through increased economic cooperation across the border. There are a number of obstacles that remain preventing the smooth flow of commerce between these regions and Canada including. Regarding infrastructure and your Department's role, one program that could be utilized to strengthen this effort would be the reauthorization of the Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program, which expired following Fiscal Year 2009. The purpose of this program was to improve the safe movement of motor vehicles at and across our Nation's borders.

Should the necessary Congressional programs, such as the Cross-Border Construction Program, be reauthorized as Congress considers the American Jobs Plan, would you consider utilizing such programs as a means to increase economic activity in regions along the northern border? Does your Department view increasing cross-border commerce as a valuable means to improving economic activity in U.S. communities along the northern border?

Answer. Congressional support on cross-border programs is very important to our national supply chain and economic growth, not only in communities along the northern border, but across the United States. Projects that were eligible in the Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program may now be eligible for other Federal-aid programs such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program, which provides flexible funding for States and localities for projects to improve the conditions and performance of any Federal-aid highway, bridge, or tunnel. The Department stands ready and willing to consider all options and programs provided for by Congress to increase the smooth and safe transportation of goods over our northern border. Reducing congestion and utilizing all modes of transportation to transport goods are goals we all share, and you have my commitment to utilize all available programs to achieve those goals.

RURAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Question. Many public schools Vermont's rural towns serve as an important hub for their communities. Many students are spending more time on campus to receive important social services, like mental health counseling and free meals, which are vital to their growth and development. Unfortunately, many of the 300 school buildings in Vermont are falling into a state of disrepair: leaking roofs, mold, and broken HVAC systems are just a few of the concerns. A recent survey of the state's school districts found that an estimated $565 million was needed in school infrastructure improvements. Several rural school infrastructure projects have been postponed due to a shortage of state funding and an inability to shoulder the cost at the local level through bond votes.

The American Jobs Plan includes $100 billion for school construction. However, only half of this amount will be allocated as direct grants; the remaining $50 billion will be set aside for interest subsidies on bonds. School districts, particularly in rural areas, that lack community wealth have historically struggled to borrow money and pass bond measures. How does the administration plan to ensure that rural schools able to access this historic investment and are not left behind in the grant process?

Answer. The IIJA will invest in America's schools, including investments in zero emission school buses, improving energy efficiency, and removing lead contamination in drinking water in schools, and improving broadband access to underserved communities (including schools in those communities).

FOREST PRODUCTS

Question. I am encouraged by President Biden's emphasis on the role of forest ecosystems in addressing climate change, sequestering carbon, and promoting biodiversity. Maintaining a viable forest products and timber industry is critical to these efforts, and for the economic recovery ahead. For generations, rural communities in states like Vermont have relied on the economic and environmental benefits of the forest economy. That forest economy supports more than 10,000 jobs and generates nearly $1.5 billion in economic output in Vermont. When paired with sustainable forestry practices, wood products greatly enhance carbon sequestration, by retaining atmospheric carbon for the functional life of wood products.

What are the primary barriers that exist to scaling up the use of timber in infrastructure projects?

Answer. The engineering properties of timber make it a suitable material for some, but not all, infrastructure applications. In selecting infrastructure materials, owners typically consider engineering properties, expected durability, inspection, and maintenance requirements, as well as initial cost. That about half of all critical findings reported by the States due to deterioration on highway bridges are in timber elements—as many as steel and concrete combined (even though there are many more steel and concrete bridges)—may factor into owners' decisions.

Question. What are benefits to rural economies and to climate of using timber and other biomass in infrastructure projects like bridges? Can I count on your Department to deploy these resources in states like Vermont, where appropriate?

Answer. The Department of Transportation does not have specific data on the economic and environmental benefits of timber infrastructure. However, there are assumed climate benefits of using timber and other biomass in infrastructure projects. For example, the increased use of timber may reduce carbon dioxide emissions if more trees are grown that can absorb these emissions. At the same time, this may reduce the need for steel and cement production, which are large carbon emitters, as well as provide some benefit to rural economies across the northeast region due to the increased use of timber and other biomass products. Decisions concerning the materials used in transportation infrastructure are made by the infrastructure owners—typically States or Federal and local agencies. The Department has resources available to support a bridge owner's decision to use timber where appropriate.

NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION

Question. Communities in Vermont, across New England and around the country benefit from the funding and capacity building work of federal commission and authorities like the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC).

How can the Department of Transportation work closely with the NBRC, and other regional commissions, to plan, distribute funding and ensure completion of the investments in the President's proposal?

Answer. The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is a multi-state regional organization that coordinates among several U.S. border states (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine), including their Municipal Planning Organizations (MPOs). Since 2001, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Transport Canada have co-led the Transportation Border Working Group (TBWG). The TBWG brings together U.S. federal government agencies with border equities, MPOs, border communities, and northern border states to meet with their Canadian counterparts to address the planning and coordination of border infrastructure and other border matters. As directed by Congress, the Department's Office of International Transportation and Trade in the Office of the Secretary coordinates border activities to ensure stakeholders are included in the management of the border as appropriate, including interagency coordination. We will continue to work through TBWG and directly with MPOs, states, and other multi-state and regional bodies to identify, prioritize, and receive feedback on projects as permitted by Federal law and guidelines.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Thank you for committing to work to address the ongoing needs of Oregon and other western states who are struggling to recover from the damage of the 2020 wildfire season. I believe the scale of natural disasters in Oregon and other western states demands additional resources that can only be delivered through disaster supplemental legislation.

What does the Department estimate was the damage to transportation infrastructure or assets as a result of the 2020 wildfire season? How much does the Department estimate is the cost to repair or replace that infrastructure?

Answer. Wildfires can affect multiple parts of transportation infrastructure assets and operations, including emergency response, road control and public messaging, highway maintenance, planning, and geotechnical response. Wildfires can cause direct impacts on transportation assets, such as burned timber bridges, tree strikes, melted culverts, burned signposts and guardrails, and pavement structure impacts. Indirect impacts from wildfire on transportation assets due to increased hydrologic responses in the watershed over the 5–10 years following a wildfire event can include rockfall, debris flows, clogged drainage structures, channel incision and migration, and bridge foundation scour failures.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), works with State DOTs and Federal Land Management Agencies to determine the total funds needed to repair highway infrastructure damaged from natural disasters and catastrophic events. Although this total only captures a portion of the impacts from fires, the following is a sum of the total damages that are eligible for support through the FHWA Emergency Relief program from 2020 wildfires.

—Number of Emergency Relief for Federal-Aid Highways (ERFA) Emergency events: 7

—Federal Share of event cost: $152,780,063.55

Question. It is widely anticipated that 2021 will be another difficult fire season. How is the Department preparing for the upcoming wildfire season?

Answer. 2021 was indeed a difficult fire season, with more than 7.8 million acres burned. Wildfires do not respect state or national borders. Combatting these vicious fires requires the resources and coordination of multiple Federal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA uses Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) to clear the airspace for those agencies responding to the fire. The FAA uses a variety of tools to notify pilots and recreational drone flyers about TFRs. In addition to publishing a Notice to Airmen advising of the TFR, the FAA frequently emails registered pilots, based on zip code, about the TFR. The FAA also uses a variety of social media platforms to notify followers that a TFR has been issued and stress the importance of keeping this airspace clear.

The FAA recognizes that drones are often used as critical tools in combating wildfires and provides options to expedite operations in response to public safety emergencies. One such pathway is by obtaining a Special Governmental Interest, or SGI Waiver/Certificate of Authorization. A dedicated team at the FAA's System Operations Support Center reviews and approves these waivers. Nearly 99% of SGI waivers are approved within 24 hours of submission. The FAA also steadily works to raise awareness of the consequences of drone incursions in firefighting efforts. Drone incursions that interrupt firefighting efforts have remained lower than their high of 41 in 2016, but there were still 21 this year. FAA continues their awareness campaigns and increased enforcement against UAS pilots who disrupt firefighting efforts.

Additionally, the FHWA's Emergency Relief (ER) Program provides funding reimbursement to states, territories, federal land management agencies and tribal governments for the reconstruction, restoration, and repair of Federal-aid and Federally-owned transportation facilities that have suffered damage from natural disasters or catastrophic failure from external causes. In December 2021, FHWA awarded $1.39 billion in Emergency Relief (ER) funds to help 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, to make repairs to roads and bridges damaged by a variety of storms, floods, wildfires and other events.

Question. The Department of Transportation is responsible not only for the management of the roads, bridges, and highways that connect us, but also the millions of acres of green spaces along these roadways. I have introduced legislation, the Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act, to better utilize these greenspaces as support habitat for critical pollinators, which are quickly disappearing.

Some states are already leading the charge and utilizing greenspaces alongside roadways to build pollinator habitat. Will you commit to working with state Departments of Transportation to build and expand best practices for pollinator habitats along roadways?

Answer. Yes, I commit to working with state Departments of Transportation to build and expand best practices for pollinator habitats along roadways. Since 2014, Federal Highway Administration has been working to provide best management practices (BMPs), supporting research, and distributing information about pollinator-friendly practices in roadside vegetation management. There is a dedicated website that provides resources for State DOTs and other transportation agencies and roadside managers that includes legislation, policy, guidance, pollinator publications, resources for pollinator-friendly practices, funding eligibilities and other funding sources, as well as State DOT pollinator-friendly practices and information.

Question. What resources are currently available from the Department of Transportation to support efforts to utilize roadside areas as pollinator habitat?

Answer. There are a number of resources available to state and local DOTs to use for pollinator habitats. FHWA has a dedicated website that consolidates these resources available at https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env__topics/ecosystems/

pollinators.aspx. The website provides links to legislation, policy, guidance, pollinator publications, resources for pollinator-friendly practices, funding eligibilities and other funding sources, as well as State DOT pollinator-friendly practices and information.

Question. How can your Department better utilize existing programs and expand existing policies to incentivize efforts to restore natural infrastructure, like pollinator habitat, as part of transportation projects?

Answer. These resources were initially compiled in 2014, as part of a Presidential Memorandum (PM) "Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey bees and Other Pollinators." These resources could be refreshed and promoted so that State and local transportation authorities are aware of these resources. The Biden-Harris Administration's support for resilience and climate change includes opportunities to use local and native vegetation with an emphasis to utilize pollinator-friendly vegetation.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN

Question. The FY21 Appropriations bill directed DOT to expand technical assistance and trainings to help state DOTs, local governments and tribal governments develop reliable indicators of vulnerability and actionable mitigation measures in all phases of transportation planning, asset management, project-specific planning and development, and operations towards improving resiliency. The bill provided $1 million for this technical assistance, as well as training, research and development efforts. Please provide an update on DOT's implementation.

Answer. Our transportation system is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The President is committed to addressing climate change, including by investing in electric vehicle charging, increasing multimodal access to transit and the zero-emission bus fleet, and supporting a robust manufacturing industry that strengthens America's competitive position in the world. Further, resilience is key. We have to ensure our roads and bridges hold up in a world that will see more powerful weather disasters. The Administration is working with communities across the country to assess vulnerabilities to flooding and weather-related risks and identify opportunities to incorporate resilience into our infrastructure systems.

The Department serves as a resource to transportation agencies and provides information on the many ways they can build resilience into the planning, construction, and operation of transportation projects. DOT has partnered with upwards of 50 resilience pilot project teams across the country to conduct climate change and extreme weather vulnerability assessments of transportation infrastructure and to analyze options for improving resilience. These projects vary in scope and emphasis and include: state-wide vulnerability assessments, analyses of engineering options for improving resilience of specific road segments, analysis of opportunities to protect assets by mimicking nature, incorporating climate risks into asset management, and deploying and monitoring adaptation solutions. Many of these projects can provide useful insights and approaches to resilience for communities across the country, and in the last year, DOT has worked to facilitate the exchange of information through workshops, webinars, technical assistance, and peer to peer engagements. We will continue partnering with Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments on the shared goal of a transportation system that provides safe mobility under current and future climate conditions, supporting local economies and quality of life.

Question. Please describe the Department of Transportation's proposals for resilient infrastructure included in the American Jobs Plan and FY22 budget request, including how these proposals will benefit infrastructure in all states-not only those along our nation's coasts.

Answer. Transportation infrastructure must be planned and constructed to withstand the impacts of extreme weather events and climate change on our roads, bridges, ports, transit systems, and airports. Transportation systems must also be able to handle large-scale emergency evacuations from natural hazards such as hurricanes or wildfires.

The Administration seeks to provide the essential funding needed to incorporate resilience and modernize our highways, roads, and main streets. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will enable these kinds of necessary investments by providing funding for resilience through the new Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost saving Transportation (PROTECT) program, airport improvements and upgrades to existing FAA assets, and port modernization efforts. In addition, IIJA and the FY 2022 budget request include DOT discretionary grant programs, such as the Rebuilding America's Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) and Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grants.

These discretionary grant programs include climate change, including resilience, as a consideration in their criteria. Furthermore, as part of our implementation of EO 14008, DOT is identifying opportunities to incorporate resilience into DOT grant and loan programs.

We are working closely with our partners at regional, state and local transportation agencies across the country to provide them with the tools and resources they need to consider climate impacts in their decision-making and to determine how we can best assist them as they make investment decisions in support of resilience. States are required by regulation to address climate change and extreme weather events when developing Asset Management Plans for highways. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has published two supporting guidance documents focused on assessing and addressing risks, including climate change, and assessing life cycle costs of groups of assets. Similarly, the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) grantees are required to develop Transit Asset Management Plans for their public transportation assets, including vehicles, facilities, equipment, and rail infrastructure. Every FTA-supported transit provider is required to inventory and assess the conditions of their assets, develop priorities for investment based on the inventory, and establish performance targets. Climate vulnerability can be cited as a factor in an agency's asset repair and replacement prioritization.

Question. Over the past 5 years, the Chinese Rail Rollingstock Corporation (CRRC) has made alarming inroads into the U.S. market. This state-owned and directed company has made aggressive advances into the United States by using state-backed financing, below-market pricing, and other anti-competitive tactics to decimate domestic railcar manufacturing with the single end goal of producing all railcars in the PRC.

In 2019, the Transit Infrastructure Vehicle Security Act (TIVSA) was signed into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020. I was a proud sponsor of this legislation.

TIVSA prevents American taxpayer dollars from being used by transit agencies to purchase railcars or buses manufactured by Chinese state-owned enterprises. I believe this is a critical tool to fight against CRRC's incursion into the American market while protecting both the economic and national security of the United States. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) should aggressively and actively enforce the letter of the law as Congress intended.

However, I am very concerned with FAQs released by DOT in the spring of 2020 that do not follow Congressional intent and effectively give CRRC a path forward to accepting federal taxpayer dollars long after the Congressional deadline of December 19, 2021 passes.

I previously mentioned this during your confirmation hearing and remained concerned that this loophole has not been addressed.

What will you do to ensure FTA reviews these FAQs and amends them to ensure they are meeting the intent members of Congress set out to achieve?

Answer. At the Department of Transportation, we must implement Federal law consistent with the express statutory language. Congress provided for a "lifetime" exemption from the rail rolling stock restriction to any transportation agency that entered into a contract with CRRC prior to December 20, 2019. The four agencies this exemption applies to are CTA, LACMTA, MBTA, and SEPTA. Transportation investments represent one of the best opportunities to spur American manufacturing and create American jobs. The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to ensuring that we lead the world in manufacturing and innovation. That means making sure American industries have a plan to succeed in the 2020s and beyond. China and Chinese companies must be held accountable for the unfair trade practices in which they so often engage, such as predatory behavior and cybersecurity intrusions. I will continue to work with Congress, American workers and businesses to ensure that our approach to procurement and our contracts support American jobs first and foremost.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN, III

ELECTRIC VEHICLES & HYDROGEN

Question. The President's Infrastructure plan calls for strong investments in electric vehicles. While I recognize the value of electric vehicles and the role they can play in reducing GHG emissions in the transportation sector and providing new manufacturing opportunities in the U.S., I have some serious concerns about how reliant we are on other countries, some of which have questionable mining practices, for the critical materials that go into the lithium ion batteries that power electric vehicles. That is why I am very intrigued by hydrogen fuel cell technology because fuel cells vehicles, like electric vehicles, produce electricity without combustion or emissions but they do not rely on a lithium battery.

In the President's plan, do hydrogen fuel cell vehicles fall under the Electric Vehicle category? If not, is the administration open to including hydrogen fuel cell vehicles in the mix? Does the Administration's plan to invest in Electric Vehicles also include investments in Electric Vehicle battery recycling?

Answer. Both hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs) and battery electric vehicles are considered electric vehicles and clean hydrogen production can play a key role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. There are many exciting opportunities in this area. Announced at President Biden's Leaders Summit on Climate, the Administration's 2030 greenhouse gas pollution reduction target specifically calls for the prioritization of clean hydrogen and recognizes the need to create good paying jobs through expanded production. The plan also calls for using the procurement power of the federal government to support early markets for clean hydrogen. The President's plan includes increased investments for both battery and fuel cell electric vehicles. Across the passenger and freight transportation modes, the variety of ways that we move people and goods will require a variety of clean technology solutions and we are investing in that suite of clean energy technologies.

Hydrogen is one of many alternative fuel or energy sources that may assist in moving the sector towards emissions reduction and ultimately decarbonization. The Department is looking at how existing programs could be used to further support investments, including collaboration with the DOE.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SUSAN M. COLLINS

NAVY PUBLIC SHIPYARD INFRASTRUCTURE

Question. Our nation's public shipyards were originally designed to build wind- and steam-powered ships—Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine was founded in 1800 for example. As a result, our public shipyards are not efficiently configured to maintain and modernize nuclear powered submarines and carriers, and our nation's dry docks, facilities, and related capital equipment are badly outdated and in need of modernization. In 2018 the Navy issued a Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Plan (SIOP), which is a comprehensive, 20-year, $21 billion effort to modernize infrastructure at the four naval shipyards. Without these investments in dry docks specifically, the Navy says it would lack the capacity for about a third of its planned maintenance periods at the shipyards and would have to defer needed maintenance.

If we all are serious about the United States competing against and deterring China, we have to consider our vital defense infrastructure. Did the Administration consider including this type of critical defense infrastructure in its proposal?

Answer. I believe a strong and resilient maritime industry is fundamentally important for the Nation and its industrial base, and is even more so now, as we work to recover from severe health and economic crises. I look forward to engaging with you and other Federal partners to address concerns of the industry and collaborating with all stakeholders, including labor unions, employers, and other stakeholder groups, to ensure our industrial maritime capacity is sufficient to meet the Nation's needs.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROY BLUNT

Question. What user fees are currently included in the Administration's infrastructure proposal? Do you believe the Administration and Congressional Republicans can work together to find a package of user fees to financing a bipartisan infrastructure bill?

Answer. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) reauthorizes and renames the Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives Program to the Strategic Innovation for Revenue Collection (§ 13001) to continue the program to test the feasibility of a road usage fee and other user-based alternative revenue mechanisms to help maintain the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund through pilot projects at the State, local, and regional level. In addition, the IIJA establishes the National Motor Vehicle Per-Mile User Fee pilot (§ 13002) to demonstrate a national motor vehicle per-mile user fee program.

I appreciate the leadership that this Committee has shown in ensuring infrastructure investments are paid for and supporting efforts to continue exploring ways to modernize our revenue sources. I look forward to supporting Congress and the Administration on implementing the IIJA.

Question. How is the Administration considering opportunities to leverage private capital to facilitate infrastructure investment? For example, how could a direct payment bond program like the one proposed in the bipartisan American Infrastructure Bond Act (Sens. Wicker and Bennet) help spur additional infrastructure investment through the municipal bond market? Also, how could advance refunding of municipal bonds like in the LOCAL Infrastructure Act (Sens. Wicker and Stabenow) free up much needed capital for state and local governments to reinvest in their infrastructure?

Answer. I recognize how important this tool is to cities and major transit agencies, and I am committed to working with Congress to consider a variety of financing options and to leveraging the Department's resources to realize President Biden's vision for a transformational investment in American infrastructure; to make it safer, more equitable, more sustainable; and create millions of good-paying jobs. That includes using the funding and financing resources of the Department, coordinated through the Build America Bureau, to work with state, local, and other partners and consider other innovative solutions that may be proposed by Congress.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) includes a $15 billion increase to the nationwide cap on Private Activity Bonds for qualified highway or surface freight transfer facilities. Further, it continues all of the programs currently offered by USDOT.

Question. The importation and exportation of goods are essential to the long-term recovery and growth of the United States economy. Shippers need dependable and reliable port fluidity to get goods to consumers in a timely manner. Most supply chain issues facing this country occur at the port level. How does the Administration's plan to help alleviate current and future port congestion issues that hamper the movement of essential goods?

Answer. Our Nation's ports are a key part of our critical infrastructure. They create jobs and make our economy more resilient and sustainable. The Department's port and intermodal infrastructure-related programs, such as the Port Infrastructure Development Program and Marine Highway Program, build upon local investments in infrastructure to deliver long-term economic benefits to American workers and communities, while also addressing climate and equity.

On November 9, 2021, as part of the Administration's ongoing efforts to address disruptions to the global supply chain, and on the heels of the passage of the President's Historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Biden-Harris Administration announced a Port Action Plan aimed at accelerating investment in our ports, waterways, and freight networks. Early actions within that plan included awarding more than $240 million in grant funding through the FY 2021 PIDP program and helping the Port of Savannah reallocate existing funding toward establishment of pop-up inland container yards that have helped the port alleviate supply chain congestion. The Department is on track to meet additional goals and timelines of the plan, including launching the first round of expanded port infrastructure grants and the next round of Marine Highway grants, each funded at record levels thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The Department recognizes the importance of these programs, and we look forward to working with Congress on supporting our Nation's ports.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN HOEVEN

Question. Over the past few years, we have been working with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to provide flexibility within the trucking Hours of Service regulations for drivers hauling livestock and agricultural commodities.

Ranchers in my state and throughout the country have continuously stressed to me the unique nature of hauling livestock—which can include long hours during loading and unloading—and the potential animal safety concerns that could arise should a driver not reach his destination within the 11 hours of driving, and 14-hour workday allowed under HOS requirements.

For the past four fiscal years, the Senate Appropriations Committee has delayed the implementation of the electronic logging device (ELD) rule for truckers hauling livestock. I will continue to push for a delay of the implementation of the ELD rule until we find a solution to the overall Hours of Service problem.

As well, I have introduced bipartisan legislation—the Modernizing Agricultural Transportation Act—which would create a working group at the Department of Transportation (DOT) comprised of a wide ranging cross section of the agricultural, highway safety, and labor industries to examine the existing regulations, and require the DOT to promulgate new Hours of Service regulations for the agriculture industry.

Will you work with me, and the Senate Commerce Committee, to reform the Hours of Service regulations for our farmers and ranchers in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill?

Answer. Yes, I commit to working with you on Hours of Service regulations and how they intersect with the varied complexities of truckers' daily work, including those who transport time-sensitive cargo such as livestock and agricultural commodities. As you know, Sec. 23018 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act significantly expanded the previous hours-of-service exemption for drivers transporting livestock. The exemption now encompasses not only a 150-air-mile radius from the point where livestock are loaded, but also a 150-air-mile radius from the final destination of the livestock.

Question. The COVID–19 pandemic has devastated the private motorcoach industry. Congress included $2 billion in assistance for the motorcoach, school bus, and U.S. flagged passenger vessels industries in the COVID Relief and Response Act signed into law on December 27, 2020.

When will the guidance for the CERTS Act Grant Program will be released, when will the application process open, and when funds will be distributed?

Answer. DOT understands the devastating impact that the COVID–19 pandemic has had on the transportation sector. As directed by Congress, Treasury is the lead Department responsible for CERTS program implementation. Treasury released guidance on May 6, the CERTS application portal opened on June 19, and the application period closed on July 19. Based on application reviews, Treasury determined that a more effective approach was to make two payments. Making an initial payment followed by a smaller "top off" payment expedited the delivery of funds to as many grantees as possible. On August 13, Treasury began notifying and releasing grant agreements to approved applicants. Treasury made grant payments on a rolling basis as soon as the grantees signed the agreements. On October 8, Treasury sent the final payments to recipients of funding provided through CERTS program. Over 1,400 motorcoach, school bus, passenger vessel and pilotage companies representing all 50 states received grants—93% of which are small businesses and more than 33% of which are minority-owned businesses. The CERTS grant recipients can be found on Treasury's website available here: https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-american-industry/coronavirus-economic-relief-for-transportation-services/Coronavirus-Economic-Relief-for-Transportation-Services-CERTS-Grant-Payments

DOT also provided support to Treasury to ensure that CERTS grant funding are distributed as promptly and responsibly as possible. At the outset, DOT stood up a team of senior career officials and technical experts from OST, FMCSA, FTA, MARAD, and U.S. Coast Guard to assist with stakeholder outreach and provide technical assistance to Treasury. For example, during the review process, FMCSA reviewed all 1,600+ motorcoach applications and conducted data checks to verify applicant eligibility. FMCSA also reviewed over 4,000 other records that had been blocked and quarantined by Treasury's system to verify none were incorrectly deemed ineligible. Treasury's and DOT's partnership and collaborative efforts contributed to Treasury's successful implementation of CERTS.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

Question. Can you reaffirm for us today that the White House does not support funneling funding solely through competitive grant programs, but also through the formula program, which gives states much more flexibility on how to prioritize and spend their federal dollars?

Answer. While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) does include several new competitive grant programs that aim to further specific national policy objectives, the vast majority of funding will be distributed by formula to states and local communities.

Questions Submitted to Administrator Michael S. Regan

Questions Submitted by Chairman Patrick Leahy

NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is no longer limited to our bridges, roads, and railways. Vermonters understand the importance of conserving our most natural infrastructure, from farmland to watersheds. Doing so is not just an environmental imperative in rural states like Vermont—it is an economic one.

Question. How can EPA, in coordination with other agencies, accelerate the conservation and restoration of natural infrastructure such as wetlands, marshes, riparian areas, and intact watersheds that are so critical for resilience to the impacts of climate change?

Answer. EPA works collaboratively with other Federal agencies across numerous programs that leverage resources and authorities to prioritize the conservation and restoration of natural infrastructure. These include our geographic programs, nonpoint source program, coastal wetlands initiative, and the Urban Waters program.

In Vermont, where nonpoint source and stormwater pollution have caused overland runoff, including in the Lake Champlain Basin, EPA has funded green infrastructure best management practices. For example, the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain used EPA funding to install rain gardens and other practices at the Bellows Free Academy in Fairfax, Alburgh Community Education Center, and the Georgia Elementary and Middle School. The Georgia Elementary and Middle School will educate kids about the benefits of green infrastructure as part of their STEM programming. EPA is supporting another project to control erosion issues at the Highgate Dam by deploying best management practices along the Northern Forest Canoe Trail on the Missisquoi River to manage stormwater runoff.

Question. Harmful algae blooms are accelerating rapidly, as the result of warmer temperatures and more severe rainfall events. What will the EPA do to assist geographic area and estuary programs, as well as wastewater and storm water infrastructure, with the funding and technical supported needed to accelerate their work and offset these impacts?

Answer. EPA is actively involved with efforts aimed at preventing and mitigating harmful algal blooms (HABs) in freshwater systems and estuaries. EPA conducts research to understand the causal agents for HABs and continues to provide technical support to assist states and tribes in the development of numeric nutrient criteria to control discharges of nitrogen and phosphorus. EPA will continue to support states in implementing their water quality standards, including states' efforts to develop HABs-related criteria, identify waters impaired for HABs, develop total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) to address HABs impairments, and include information on impairments, TMDLs, and other plans in the How's My Waterway online tool.

EPA also provides support and technical assistance to states and tribes challenged with cyanotoxins in their source waters. EPA has offered monitoring, analysis, and risk communication strategies and direct monitoring and laboratory analysis support during HABs events. EPA supports the cyanobacteria monitoring network (https://cyanos.org/), available nationally, to assist states, tribes, and communities in identifying HABs. Further, EPA has developed several tools and HABs in drinking and recreational waters.

Investments included in the American Jobs Plan will also assist in rebuilding our nation's infrastructure and addressing harmful algal blooms and other environmental and public health needs. The American Jobs Plan provides $111 billion, primarily in grants and low-cost flexible loans to states, Tribes, territories, and disadvantaged communities across the country to upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants, and support clean water infrastructure across rural America

RURAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Like many rural states, Vermont's aging water infrastructure requires significant investment. According to an annual report card by the American Society of Civil Engineers, Vermont's drinking water infrastructure remains at a C-minus grade, with storm water and wastewater infrastructure even further behind. The situation is even more urgent for low-income rural populations, which are especially burdened by the high costs of replacing aging assets, addressing emerging contaminants like PFAS, understaffed water systems, and an increase in extreme weather due to climate change. I have worked hard to secure Federal funds for Vermont to close this gap, replace our aging systems, and increase community resilience, but much more work remains. As we work to increase funding for critical infrastructure upgrades, low-resource communities still lack the technical and financial capacity to secure funding and implement projects.

Question. What role can technical assistance play in supporting these communities, particularly those with smaller, decentralized water and wastewater systems?

Answer. EPA's technical assistance and training programs help to ensure that all communities, especially small and underserved communities, have the tools they need to address their pressing water infrastructure and other water quality needs. In addition, EPA provides training and technical assistance to small and rural wastewater and drinking water systems to improve their operation and management practices and promote sustainability. Examples of EPA technical assistance and training programs that help rural communities include the Small System Technical Assistance for Drinking Water and Wastewater Grant and the New Technical Assistance for Small Wastewater Systems Grant.

The American Jobs Plan includes additional critical investments that will help to modernize small and rural water systems. The Plan will scale up existing, successful programs, including by providing $56 billion in grants and low-cost flexible loans to states, Tribes, territories, and disadvantaged communities across the country. The Plan also provides $10 billion in funding to monitor and remediate PFAS in drinking water and to invest in rural small water systems and household well and wastewater systems, including drainage fields.

WOODSTOVES

I applaud EPAs implementation of much higher emissions standards for residential wood heaters, spurring the emergence of a new generation of highly-efficient devices to the marketplace. These advances in efficiency over the last decade have helped heating devices like pellet stoves and boilers achieve efficiency ratings over 80 percent. Deploying these new wood heaters can help states like Vermont achieve carbon reduction goals and improve air quality in rural communities while providing local, renewable, and relatively low-cost fuel. At the same time, old, dirty, and inefficient wood heaters abound. They are also highly durable, and without a concerted Federal effort to remove them from the market, they could remain in circulation in perpetuity.

Question. What is the value in expanding Federal support for the buy-back/removal from market of old, non-compliant, residential wood heaters? What can EPA do to initiate this type of effort?

Answer. Smoke from wood burning contains fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and other air pollutants, which may result in outdoor air concentrations exceeding Federal air quality standards and harming public health. EPA is actively working to improve testing and certification to ensure that changing out old, inefficient wood burning devices remains an important tool to reduce particle pollution in communities that use wood for heat.

Expanded resources would afford EPA the ability to undertake and accelerate a multi-year project to develop improved Clean Air Act compliance measurement methods for testing new woodstoves. These methods would better reflect real-world conditions and additional funding would allow EPA to deploy them sooner.

Through EPA's Burn Wise program, the Agency is working with recipients of Targeted Airshed Grant funds and other state, local, and tribal programs to implement woodstove changeouts. Burn Wise also collaborates with communities, industry, and other stakeholders to educate wood burning residents on how to achieve efficient fires that maximize heat and minimize smoke.

RURAL VILLAGES AND TOWNS

The average town in Vermont has 1,200 people and leadership that is almost all volunteers with full time jobs. These towns are ready to make the investments to update their water, their sewer, their roads, and their zoning and build more housing, and attract young families and new small businesses. But, doing so is a bureaucratic maze. The American Jobs Plan is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for every part of our country.

Question. How can the EPA support rural places and small towns in this infrastructure plan? How can we ensure that this funding benefits everyone in the country, not just cities that have already been able to invest in the requirements for shovel-ready projects?

Answer. The American Jobs Plan specifically commits to upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants, and support clean water infrastructure across rural America. Specifically, the American Jobs Plan provides funding to rural communities through several EPA programs, including the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program. These programs provide low-cost, flexible loans and loan forgiveness. In addition, EPA provides training and technical assistance to small and rural wastewater and drinking water systems through programs like the Small System Technical Assistance for Drinking Water and Wastewater Grant Program and a new Technical Assistance for Small Wastewater Systems Grant Program. The American Jobs Plan investment in these grant programs will help to rebuild the Nation's water infrastructure, including infrastructure needs and assistance for rural and disadvantaged communities and tribal nations.

CLEAN SCHOOL BUS REBATE PROGRAM

President Biden's American Jobs Plan includes an initiative to electrify at least 20 percent of our school bus fleet through a new Clean Buses for Kids Program at the EPA. Initiatives like this are critical to meeting our national emissions reductions goals and ensuring cleaner air for our children and communities, particularly in rural areas where bus routes are longer. The EPA's existing School Bus Rebate program has served as a model for this important work. In recent years, however, only two Vermont school districts have secured rebates through this program, out of hundreds of awards.

Question. As we scale up this program, how do we ensure equitable distribution to smaller and more rural communities, for which these upgrades are particularly important?

Answer. The Clean Buses for Kids Program in the American Jobs Plan will build on the successes and lessons learned from the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) Program. EPA's DERA School Bus Rebate program, most recently authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, provides rebates to eligible applicants through a lottery process. This popular program is consistently oversubscribed on an annual basis, resulting in most applications going unfunded. The new Clean Buses for Kids Program will create more opportunities for EPA to meet the needs of schools, including those in smaller and more rural states.

Already, EPA has taken steps to achieve a greater geographic distribution of school bus rebate awards. For example, the agency updated its selection process in 2018 to ensure that at least one applicant from each state submitting an eligible application is selected for funding. Moving forward, EPA will continue to explore options to ensure clean school buses are available across the country, including in rural areas. The agency will also continue to improve outreach and educational efforts so that more communities, including smaller towns and rural areas, are aware of our funding opportunities.

EPA will follow congressional direction in how to allocate funding for the new Clean Buses for Kids Program.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

WILDFIRES

Thank you for committing to work to address the ongoing needs of Oregon and other western states who are struggling to recover from the damage of the 2020 wildfire season. While FEMA has delivered substantial emergency relief to Oregon, I believe the scale of natural disasters in Oregon and other western states demands additional resources that can only be delivered through disaster supplemental legislation.

Question. I greatly appreciated that you highlighted the impact that wildfire smoke has on air quality and public health in your testimony. Could you elaborate and expand on the specific impact that wildfire smoke has on air quality and public health?

Answer. Smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gases and fine particles produced when wood and other organic materials burn. The biggest health threat from smoke is from fine particles. These microscopic particles can get into a person's eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause a variety of health problems. Short-term exposures to particles (hours or days) can cause symptoms such as burning eyes or runny nose, and can also aggravate lung disease, causing asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and may also increase susceptibility to respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short-term exposures have been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias. Long-term exposures, experienced by people living for many years in areas with high particle levels, have been associated with reduced lung function, development of chronic bronchitis, and even premature death.

In addition, to impacts on ambient air quality, wildfire smoke can enter homes and buildings, exposing people advised to stay indoors during wildfire smoke events. The extent to which smoke infiltrates into buildings depends on a number of factors including the leakiness of the building, whether doors and windows can be kept closed, whether outdoor air is brought in via mechanical ventilation systems, and whether that air is filtered.

EPA has developed information for people to reduce their exposure to smoke at home, which can be found on our Wildfires and Indoor Air Quality webpage. For commercial buildings and other similar building types such as schools, EPA representatives participated in the development of American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineer's (ASHRAE) Planning Framework for Protecting Commercial Building Occupants from Smoke During Wildfire Events.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGE FROM 2020 WILDFIRES

Thank you for committing to work to address the ongoing needs of Oregon and other western states who are struggling to recover from the damage of the 2020 wildfire season. While FEMA has delivered substantial emergency relief to Oregon, I believe the scale of natural disasters in Oregon and other western states demands additional resources that can only be delivered through disaster supplemental legislation.

Question. What does the Agency estimate the damage to water infrastructure from 2020 wildfires was?

Answer. There were five Major Disaster Declarations for wildfires occurring in 2020. Damage includes, but is not limited to, damaged infrastructure (tanks, pipes, pumps, electrical, etc.), erosion of berms, and active emergency protective measures (e.g. preventing or purging sewage leakage into public water supply). According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance database, the declarations and estimated damages are as follows:

—DR–4558 California: Approximately $26.5 million
—DR–4562 Oregon: Approximately $5.8 million
—DR–4569 California: Approximately $3.0 million
—DR–4581 Colorado: Approximately $0.0 ($0.01 million) several close calls
—DR–4584 Washington: Approximately $0.0 (no water/wastewater utilities claimed damage to FEMA)

Actual estimates are likely higher as additional claims of damage are expected from water and wastewater utilities and not all damage is obvious until reconstruction begins. For example, there can be contamination of underground pipelines from thermal exposure, which might require pipeline replacement. The estimates also may not include costs for water systems to provide additional or alternative treatment due to changes in source water quality (e.g. increased sediment loading and heavy metals) from the wildfires. In addition, FEMA's Public Assistance program only covers certain eligible costs for public utilities (e.g., labor, equipment, materials, contract work, direct and indirect administrative costs) and does not cover the thousands of private utilities or private wells that were damaged.

AGENCY PLANNING—WILDFIRE SMOKE

Thank you for committing to work to address the ongoing needs of Oregon and other western states who are struggling to recover from the damage of the 2020 wildfire season. While FEMA has delivered substantial emergency relief to Oregon, I believe the scale of natural disasters in Oregon and other western states demands additional resources that can only be delivered through disaster supplemental legislation.

Question. It is widely anticipated that 2021 will be another difficult fire season. How is the Agency preparing for upcoming wildfire season? In your answer, please address how the Agency is planning for wildfire smoke.

Answer. EPA will continue to provide the public with key air quality and health-related information and tools needed to understand the impacts of wildfire and prescribed fires on air quality and public health. This includes the AirNow website, the Fire and Smoke Map, and the Smoke-Ready Toolbox, which contains resources to educate people about the risks of smoke exposure and actions they can take to protect their health.

EPA has coordinated with land management agencies and state regulatory agencies to find opportunities to apply appropriate wildfire mitigation strategies—including employing prescribed fire.

To address indoor air quality issues during wildfire smoke events, EPA plans to

—Produce a video demonstrating how to set up a “clean room” to reduce smoke exposure at home, which will illustrate the steps described on our Create a Clean Room webpage.
—Continue to participate in an American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineer (ASHRAE) committee tasked with developing a guideline for “Protecting Building Occupants from Smoke During Wildfire and Prescribed Burn Events,” which is expected to be completed in 2022. More information about the purpose and scope of the proposed guideline can be found on the ASHRAE Titles, Purposes and Scopes webpage under GPC 44P.
—Update and create new factsheets associated with Wildfire Smoke: A Guide for Public Health Officials.

Children and pregnant people are particularly at risk to health consequences of exposure to wildfire smoke. Because these groups are particularly vulnerable, EPA and other stakeholders recently held a workshop addressing the topic of children’s health and wildfire smoke, which identified proposed recommendations for reducing children’s exposure to smoke. Once finalized, these recommendations will be made available to the public on the Wildfire Guide Post-Publication Updates webpage on AirNow.gov. The meeting organizers and workshop participants are considering how to share and implement the recommendations during the 2021 wildfire season and beyond.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN

AMERICAN JOBS PLAN

Question. Please describe EPA’s proposals for resilient infrastructure included in the American Jobs Plan and FY22 budget request, including how these proposals will benefit infrastructure throughout the country-not just in states along the coasts.

Answer. The American Jobs Plan is an investment in America that will create millions of good jobs and rebuild our country’s infrastructure. In the American Jobs Plan, President Biden committed to “deliver infrastructure Americans can trust, because it will be resilient to floods, fires, storms, and other threats, and not fragile in the face of these increasing risks.” These are impacts that are already affecting Americans in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. He also wrote: “Building back better requires that the investments in this historic plan make our infrastructure more resilient in the face of increasingly severe floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and other risks. Every dollar spent on rebuilding our infrastructure during the Biden administration will be used to prevent, reduce, and withstand the impacts of the climate crisis.”

The American Jobs Plan includes an $111 billion investment to rebuild the nation’s aging water infrastructure, which is vulnerable to the full range of climate impacts. The investments aim to replace 100 percent of the nation’s lead pipes and service lines, upgrade and modernize drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants, and support water infrastructure and resiliency across rural America.

The FY 2022 President’s Budget requests a total of $3.56 billion for several of EPA’s water infrastructure programs that include the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs), Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), Alaska Native Villages, and Mexico Border. The EPA also supports water infrastructure through grants authorized under the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act and America’s Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA). This increased Federal investment paired with EPA’s technical assistance and training programs help to ensure that all communities, especially small and underserved communities, have available tools to help address their pressing water infrastructure and other water quality needs.

The FY 2022 President’s Budget also requests a total of $1.53 billion for EPA’s Superfund Program of which approximately $1.1 billion is specifically for the Superfund Remedial, Removal and Emergency Response programs. EPA also requests $140 million for the Brownfields Project program to assess and clean up contaminated properties in communities and return these idle sites to communities for economic and environmental revitalization. Hurricanes and extreme precipitation events-the hallmarks of climate change-can flood these contaminated properties and toxic waste sites and spread pollution throughout neighborhoods, making expedited cleanup of these sites critical in the face of a warming climate.

Together, the American Jobs Plan and the FY 2022 President’s Budget enable EPA to significantly expand its effort to fund, partner with and build the capacity of local utilities, private investors, and state programs to expand the array of funding options to meet future infrastructure needs that improve resiliency, reduce exposure to contaminants, address vulnerabilities, including cyber-related issues, and increase water workforce and system capacity.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN, III

COORDINATION OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS

Previous packages have included considerable amounts of money that can be used for infrastructure. I fought hard to make broadband, water, and sewer eligible expenses for communities that don't have major outstanding COVID expenses. That represents $350 billion for state and local assistance, as well as an additional $10 billion for critical capital projects like broadband. I can tell you from talking to many of these city and county officials over the past few months that they are ecstatic about these funds. It's the first time they have control of their future in their own hands. At the same time, we need to make sure that we are making smart investments with these funds. The President's plan includes $111 billion for water infrastructure as well as $100 billion for broadband. Taken together, that's more than half a trillion dollars toward some of our most pressing infrastructure needs.

Question. How much funding has been provided in previous coronavirus relief packages for infrastructure?

Answer. EPA did not receive any infrastructure funding as part of the CARES Act (Pub. L. 116–136). The American Rescue Plan of 2021 (Pub. L. 117–2) provided EPA with $100 million in funding to address air pollution and the disparate health impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic. The appropriators gave EPA the flexibility to use some of these resources for infrastructure-oriented state and local assistance grants.

The American Rescue Plan also provided $350 billion in the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to respond to the COVID–19 emergency and bring back jobs. These funds can be used to make necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Finally, the American Rescue Plan provides $10 billion for critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring; this includes broadband infrastructure, connectivity devices and equipment, critical community hubs, and other capital assets.

Question. How are you going to build on the funding we have already provided in an infrastructure bill?

Answer. The American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan together are investments in America that, with the agency's FY 2022 President's Budget request, will create millions of jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, address environmental justice and tackle the climate crisis. The American Rescue Plan, as a first step, provides $100 million for the EPA to advance environmental justice and help states, tribes, and localities improve air quality for their communities. Per the legislative text, EPA will use the funds to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID–19 pandemic and disproportionate environmental or public health risks in minority populations or low-income populations

Building on these environmental justice and air quality projects, the American Jobs Plan includes an $111 billion investment to help rebuild the nation's aging water infrastructure. This investment aims to replace 100 percent of the nation's lead pipes and service lines, upgrade and modernize drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants, and support water infrastructure and resiliency across rural America. The Plan also includes $5 billion for the remediation and redevelopment of Brownfields and Superfund sites. This investment will spur the cleanup of critical infrastructure in distressed and disadvantaged communities and turn idle property into new hubs of economic growth.

EPA's FY 2022 President's Budget provides the foundation for successful implementation of the American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan projects. The Budget accelerates job-creating water infrastructure improvements, elevates environmental justice across the agency, and increases support for science.

Question. How are you going to coordinate with local communities, states, and other agencies to ensure that this funding addresses our long-term needs?

Answer. Ensuring Federal resources are dedicated to addressing communities' long-term needs is central to EPA's shared environmental responsibilities with our state and local community partners. Through the agency's Regional Offices, the Local Government Advisory Committee, and other forums, EPA is committed to regular and ongoing engagement with states, tribes, and local governments across the country who know their communities better than the Federal government ever could. EPA is committed to maintaining and enhancing these open lines of communication, working collaboratively across all levels of government, and working directly with local communities to ensure funds are provided to priority projects that meet both short-term and long-term infrastructure challenges.

MINDEN, WV

The President's Infrastructure Plan calls for a $5 billion investment in brownfield and superfund site remediation throughout the country. Since 1984, the EPA has designated Minden, WV, as a superfund site after an industrial plant polluted the town with PCBs. This site has had a devastating impact on my constituents, and in 2019, after years and years of urging, the EPA finally added Minden to its National Priorities List (NPL). I appreciate the EPA's efforts to assist this community, but the residents of Minden are in desperate need of additional help. Members of the public have expressed concerns about the EPA's data collection and research processes, as well as their dissatisfaction with the status quo, which makes them feel vulnerable in their own neighborhood.

Question. How will the Environmental Justice offices within your agencies collaborate and incorporate outreach to different types of stakeholders that live in and represent communities like Minden?

Answer. EPA has a long and collaborative working relationship with West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's (WVDEP's) Environmental Justice program and will continue to advise, support, and provide training as they advance environmental justice for all West Virginians.

I understand that the community has many concerns about the cleanup process. In Minden, EPA's site team developed a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) to facilitate dialogue between the community and EPA to encourage dynamic participation throughout the cleanup process. The CIP is a site-specific resource for EPA staff, state and local partners, and the community that provides general Superfund program information, describes the site and impacted community, identifies and assesses community needs, concerns, and expectations, and shares planned participation activities and communication options. As part of the CIP development, EPA incorporated information from the agency's environmental justice screening tool to provide additional information about the community. EPA is using information from community interviews, the various agency environmental justice tools, and our work with WVDEP to target outreach to ensure community members can meaningfully participate in the Superfund process, consistent with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). EPA will follow up with your office to better understand the concerns of the community about the data collection and research process.

Question. Will this include state & local government, civic organizations, trade organizations, and technical professionals representing affected communities?

Answer. Yes, state and local government, civic and trade organizations, and technical professionals representing affected communities are very important to advancing the site work. To ensure their involvement, the EPA Site Team has monthly coordination meetings with the WVDEP to discuss progress and the schedule for the ongoing remedial investigation and site activities. The Site Team consistently offers to facilitate and provide the community with resources for forming a Community Advisory Group and applying for a technical assistance grant. EPA reiterated this recently in an April 2021 letter to an attorney representing various community members. Additionally, EPA has reached out to local governments to facilitate discussions on grant applications and attended a public meeting related to the sewer line upgrade project hosted by the City of Oak Hill.

Question. What concrete steps can we take in the coming weeks and months to show these families that help is finally on the way?

Answer. EPA strives to maintain transparent and frequent communication and an open dialogue with the Minden community. The January 2021 virtual public meeting, which covered the Remedial Investigation Phase 1 sampling results and plans for Phase 2 sampling, was well attended, and the community asked thoughtful and detailed questions. EPA answered each question and received input on Phase 2 sample locations from several community members. The Site Team discussed the input with community members, and the Remedial Project Manager visited the site and had discussions with community members in March 2021. The community receives monthly updates on status, progress, and key events.

EPA is finalizing workplans and sampling locations for Phase 2 remedial investigation sampling. EPA, WVDEP, and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are working expeditiously to begin the next phase of field work sampling. The Site Team expects to approve the field sampling plan, including sample locations, over the next 45 days and begin sampling in July 2021. EPA will develop and share a fact sheet with proposed locations and seek final community input prior to beginning field work.[1]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN HOEVEN

CARBON CAPTURE, UTILIZATION AND STORAGE (CCUS)

Question. We've been working to crack the code on CCUS because accelerating the deployment of carbon capture technology is the single most effective thing we can do to lower emissions, while keeping the lights on for families and our economy.

We appreciate the administration's work to prioritize CCUS, including the inclusion of our bipartisan proposals to enhance the 45Q credit for CCUS as well as the SCALE Act, which supports the buildout of necessary infrastructure, including pipelines, to transport and store CO_2.

—Do you support the buildout of new CO_2 pipelines?

—Do you agree that we need more predictable and transparent regulations to build this needed infrastructure?

—Do support new infrastructure and technology to capture natural gas and prevent flaring?

—Does this include supporting new pipeline infrastructure to gather and transport natural gas, and reduce methane emissions?

—Last year, we worked with the Trump administration to improve and modernize the NEPA review process. At a minimum, do you agree that project developers should have more predictable timelines and that participating agencies should face?

Answer. In line with the bipartisan SCALE Act, the Administration supports large-scale sequestration efforts that leverage the best science and prioritize community engagement. To accelerate responsible carbon capture deployment and ensure permanent storage, the President's plan reforms and expands the bipartisan Section 45Q tax credit, making it direct pay and easier to use for hard-to-decarbonize industrial applications, direct air capture, and retrofits of existing power plants.

As directed by Executive Order 13990, EPA is reviewing the final rule titled "Oil and Natural Gas Sector: Emission Standards for New, Reconstructed, and Modified Sources Reconsideration." In reviewing the rule, EPA is considering how states have addressed methane emissions at oil and gas operations and new technologies to capture methane. EPA has opened a public docket for pre-proposal comments and plans to convene listening sessions for stakeholders.

Consistent with Executive Order 13990, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is reviewing regulations implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to ensure that the regulations effectively implement NEPA and serve its multiple purposes. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and CEQ also are tasked with jointly considering whether to recommend a replacement to the revoked Executive Order 13807, Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects. EPA stands ready to support CEQ and OMB as needed and will provide advice based on EPA's experience in independently reviewing all Federal agencies' environmental impact statements and as a permitting agency.

COAL-FIRED GENERATION

Question. Coal-fired generation provided over 50 percent of the power to the two regional grids in North Dakota (SPP & MISO) during February's extreme cold weather. This demonstrates that the administration's goal for the power sector by 2035 is not feasible without the mass deployment of CCUS.

Further, China added 38 gigawatts of new coal-fired power in 2020 and has another 247 gigawatts of coal power under development.

—As developing economies continue to invest in new coal-fired generation, wouldn't you agree that CCUS technology is critical to any global emissions reduction solution?

Answer. It's critical that we look at all the tools in the toolbox with regard to climate mitigation. To accelerate responsible carbon capture deployment and ensure permanent storage, President Biden's plan reforms and expands the bipartisan Section 45Q tax credit, making it direct pay and easier to use for hard-to-decarbonize industrial applications, direct air capture, and retrofits of existing power plants. The administration also supports large-scale sequestration efforts that leverage the best

[1] Proposed sample locations will be posted to the public site profile page at http://www.epa.gov/superfund/shaffer.

science and prioritize community engagement, in line with the bipartisan SCALE Act, all while ensuring that overburdened communities are protected from increases in cumulative pollution. To the extent that the United States can be among the first movers on climate mitigation, we have an opportunity to responsibly develop these types of technologies through American ingenuity and export them to other countries.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND

Question. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund is an incredibly important funding mechanism that provides low-interest loans to states to finance improvements for wastewater infrastructure. This is crucial for mitigating nutrient loads and preventing waste from entering our waterways. Unfortunately, the formula by which these funds are allotted to the states has not significantly changed since 1987, meaning that states receive funds largely based on outdated needs, and the populations that states had in 1987. This reality largely disadvantages states whose populations and water infrastructure needs have grown since 1987. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, on the other hand, takes current need and population into account.

a. Does the Administration believe the Clean Water State Revolving Fund allotment formula should reflect the actual needs of each state?

b. Does the Administration support a modernization of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund allotment formula to account for the population growth that many states have seen since 1987?

c. Will you commit to supporting a modernization of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund allotment formula to more closely reflect the method for allotment of funds under the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund program, so that the Clean Water allotment better addresses wastewater infrastructure needs?

d. As the Clean Watersheds Need Survey is in need of reform, would you support an interim allotment formula based on population to better address wastewater need while a new formula based on a reformed needs survey is in development?

Answer. In May 2016, EPA produced a "Review of the Allotment of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)" for Congress in accordance with section 5005 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014. To develop the report, EPA reviewed the adequacy of the current CWSRF allotment formula and concluded that the current allotment formula was inadequate because most states do not receive appropriated funds in proportion to their reported needs.

In addition, the report also provided several possible options for updating the allotment formula by incorporating a variety of factors such as needs, population, water quality impairment, and underlying CWSRF performance. The report also explored ways Congress could implement policy priorities using a set-aside within the appropriation (e.g., ability to pay set-aside). Finally, EPA recommended that any future CWSRF allotment formula be updated periodically to reflect changes more adequately over time. EPA looks forward to providing technical assistance to Congress as it considers legislative changes for the current allotment formula.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SECRETARY GINA M. RAIMONDO

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

BROADBAND

Question. One issue at the forefront of debate in Vermont is the necessity of access to reliable, high speed Internet. In fact, it was the topic of a virtual roundtable I hosted in Vermont—during which some participants experienced this challenge firsthand. President Biden's American Jobs Plan calls for the prioritization of "support for broadband networks owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and co-operatives." Over the past three years, Vermont has seen the creation of a new type of broadband entity, Communications Union Districts (CUDs), which operate like a multi-town fire or wastewater district but with the goal of building broadband infrastructure to municipalities. The first Vermont CUD was established in 2016, and now there are 11 districts representing almost two-third of the state's municipalities. It is these organizations and the few small, community-minded internet service providers that are expected to be the ones that bring fiber to Vermont homes.

With these locally led efforts in mind, how does the administration propose to distribute funds in a way that ensures they get to rural communities? From my perspective, it may be easiest to allocate funds directly to states to let them fill in their gaps. Do you have concerns with an auction or bidding model, that very well may wind up subsidizing corporations or satellite technology both of which would be neither future proof nor community-owned?

Answer. As a member of President Biden's "Jobs Cabinet," I champion the Administration's call-in the American Jobs Plan-for 100 percent of Americans, including those living in rural areas, to have access to high-speed, affordable, and reliable Internet to ensure equity of opportunities for learning and earning. As a former Governor, I also agree that states have an important role to play in determining how to distribute funding to the areas that have yet to reap the full benefit of broadband in their communities.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has worked with communities across the country for years, through the BroadbandUSA program, to help them understand their challenges as well as the assets they can leverage as they address their broadband roadmap. NTIA also has a robust connection to states through its State Broadband Leaders Network (SBLN), a cohort of government officials representing the 50 states and three territories that focus on state level broadband and

digital inclusion efforts. SBLN was consulted in the development of NTIA's grant programs and will continue to serve as a valuable resource to promote outreach and to provide us with feedback as the programs are launched.

NTIA will also leverage the National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM), which is improving our understanding of the state of broadband availability across the country, and is a tool for state and federal policymakers in determining how best to target investments. Recognizing the ability of the NBAM to support their own broadband programs, 37 states and federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Commerce's Economic Development Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs have partnered with NTIA on this initiative.

Question. During the April 20 hearing, I asked you about the administration's broadband infrastructure plan, and you assured me that the administration and your Department are committed to providing access to quality, high-speed broadband to all Americans regardless of geographic location. You also committed to studying prior broadband programs, learning from past mistakes made, and working with the entities that are in the best position to provide broadband, including non-profits, co-operatives, or municipalities. Toward the end of your response, you did not rule out your Department considering "alternatives to fiber in cases where that is the best and most-effective way to deliver broadband."

While there are a number of alternatives to fiber, such as satellite technology, I have heard concerns from stakeholders and officials in Vermont about non-fiber broadband providers over-promising and under-delivering after winning auction bids for the region. The issue at hand is that while such technologies could theoretically cover a wide-range of service areas in a cost-effective manner, in practice that is not always the case. Do you commit to working with state and local officials on how best to implement various broadband technologies for their specific region when deciding how your Department should disburse broadband-related funds?

Answer. NTIA has a history of successful coordination and consultation with multiple levels of government, and I will ensure this continues to be the case as the agency implements the Administration's ambitious, and essential, broadband vision that prioritizes building "future proof" broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas so that we finally reach 100 percent high-speed broadband coverage.

Through its BroadbandUSA work, NTIA has served local, state, territorial, and tribal governments, industry and non-profits seeking to expand broadband connectivity and promote digital inclusion by providing solution-neutral technical assistance and convening regional workshops that bring local stakeholders together. NTIA also collaborates with states through its State Broadband Leaders Network.

NTIA has heard concerns from state leaders and other stakeholders over the years about challenges they face accessing federal funding due to inaccurate broadband availability maps and reverse-auction models that may reward the lowest-cost bidder but fail to reach the hardest-to-reach areas, or areas without sufficient perceived economic return on investment.

As NTIA develops the grant application review and selection process, it will allow state and local officials to articulate their needs and explain any concerns with existing awards to their areas that might be of concern. NTIA will also consult the

National Broadband Availability Map, and coordinate with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and USDA to understand whether existing awards made in a particular area consistently provide the minimum speeds at the broadband threshold as well as the latency requirements outlined in the legislation. In addition, NTIA is working with other federal agencies to coordinate and to ensure that the most current information about the status of an awarded area is taken into consideration before making grant awards. On June 25, 2021, NTIA, USDA and the FCC announced that the three agencies had signed an interagency agreement committing to data-sharing and coordination. The agencies are meeting regularly to develop the processes required to implement the agreement.

HOMEWORK GAP

Question. Access to broadband remains a significant barrier for our rural students to succeed in the classroom in Vermont. The COVID–19 pandemic has only exacerbated the digital divide. With nearly 61,000 homes in the state lacking access to high-speed internet, remote learning forced many students to drive to school and library parking lots, or even spend their days in their cars outside of McDonald's, in order to attend class and complete their homework. But even public WiFi hotspots remain scarce in rural communities and schools often struggle to secure affordable broadband deals.

How does the administration plan to address the homework gap through the American Jobs Plan and ensure that Vermont's rural students have access to the tools they need to participate in an increasingly digital learning environment?

Answer. Too many students in both rural and urban areas suffered tremendous hardship accessing education during the pandemic. As a matter of equity, and as an imperative for our Nation's future competitiveness, the Administration is committed to closing the homework gap.

The President's plan prioritizes building "future proof" broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas so that we finally reach 100 percent high-speed broadband coverage. I am committed to coordinating with the FCC, U.S. Department of Education, USDA, and other federal departments and agencies to eliminate the homework gap for students and close the digital divide for all in our country. On June 25, 2021, NTIA, USDA and the FCC announced that the three agencies had signed an interagency agreement committing to data-sharing and coordination. The agencies are meeting regularly to develop the processes required to implement the agreement.

I also recognize and applaud the efforts Congress has already made to expand access. The bipartisan Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, included $1 billion for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, $300 million for the Broadband Infrastructure Program, and $285 million for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. The American Rescue Plan included state and local emergency relief funding, some of which may be used for broadband infrastructure. The American Rescue Plan also created the $7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund to help schools and libraries provide connected devices and broadband connectivity to students, school staff, and library patrons during the coronavirus pandemic. These programs will go a long way towards closing the homework gap.

SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY

Question. The American Jobs Plan proposal includes funding for revitalizing the American semiconductor industry, to ensure that we have reliable, trusted hardware for our digital infrastructure.

How will you make sure these funds make the most of expertise of rural states like Vermont that already have significant workforce and facility capability in creating assured and Trusted microelectronics?

Answer. The Department is developing plans for the implementation of the CHIPS Act funding requested as part of the American Jobs Plan and included in the United States Innovation and Competitiveness Act (USICA) passed by the Senate. The Department is designing the program to incentivize the construction and expansion of facilities to restore U.S. leadership in semiconductor manufacturing.

Departments and Agencies are working closely together to leverage and support the wide range of resources and expertise found across America that make up the microelectronics innovation and manufacturing ecosystem.

The Department of Commerce's evaluation criteria for CHIPS will include both the support for workforce that the applicant will be able to provide, as well as the ability of the community to support manufacturing in terms of available workforce and necessary supporting infrastructure.

RURAL VILLAGES AND TOWNS

Question. The average town in Vermont has 1,200 people and leadership that is almost all volunteers with full time jobs. These towns are ready to make the investments to update their water, their sewer, their roads, and their zoning and build more housing, and attract young families and new small businesses. But, doing so is a bureaucratic maze. The American Jobs Plan is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for every part of our country.

How can the EDA and other Department of Commerce agencies support rural places and small towns in this infrastructure plan? How can we ensure that this funding benefits everyone in the country, not just cities that have already been able to invest in the requirements for shovel-ready projects?

Answer. Both the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) play a critical role in supporting rural America.

EDA works with communities of all sizes and geographies and historically approximately two-thirds of its funds are awarded to rural communities. One of the unique qualities of EDA is that it meets community needs in ways that the communities seek, and thus supports communities whether or not they have shovel-ready projects.

EDA has resources to assist rural communities and small towns in planning for and managing projects in support of their economic development goals, including through technical assistance. Foremost, EDA's mission-driven Regional Office staff, including its Economic Development Representatives, stand ready to guide rural applicants through EDA's project development process. And at the nation-wide level, EDA's Research and National Technical Assistance program has focused on building capacity of small rural communities—preparing them to participate in technology-led development and small-scale manufacturing.

In addition, EDA's Regional Economic Development Integrators are able to call on their strategic partnerships with federal colleagues at the Northern Border Regional Commission, USDA Rural Development, Small Business Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development and other agencies to connect communities to the technical and financial assistance that best fits their long-term goals for inclusive economic prosperity. EDA-funded partners, such as Economic Development Districts and some University Centers, also assist communities with accessing EDA funding.

As NTIA implements the broadband programs which can benefit rural areas, it is also coordinating with EDA to promote outreach and to provide technical assistance to facilitate participation by smaller jurisdictions. NTIA and EDA have coordinated well over the years to provide regional workshops that assist communities in development of their broadband plans. They are committed to continuing this coordination to bring the benefits of broadband and economic development to all communities across the country.

NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION

Question. Communities in Vermont, across New England and around the country benefit from the funding and capacity building work of federal commission and authorities like the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC).

How can the EDA and other Commerce agencies continue to work closely with the NBRC, and other regional commissions, to plan, distribute funding and ensure completion of the investments in the President's proposal?

Answer. EDA is continuing to collaborate closely with the NBRC. Opportunities for such collaboration include joint outreach, project development, and complementary grant making to support the economic diversification and development strategies of state and local economic development partners in Vermont and surrounding communities of the Northeast.

As required by Congress since Fiscal Year 2018, EDA will again this year transfer $3 million of its Economic Adjustment Assistance funds to NBRC for projects selected by NBRC that "contribute to the recovery of forest-based economies and may include support for forest-based businesses, outdoor recreation infrastructure, and activities that assist in the recruitment and retention of employees in rural communities within the territory." This arrangement requires that any project funded through EDA's discretionary appropriations and selected by NBRC as meritorious must meet the requirements set forth for both agencies. This fact, at times, causes confusion and some projects put forward have been known to meet one set of requirements and potentially fail to meet the other. EDA and NBRC are committed to working through those issues as they arise so that the arrangement can succeed in delivering support for communities in the Northern Border Region. An independently-funded NBRC would enable the Commission to work as a co-equal partner with EDA and invest in larger, more impactful, shared regional economic development projects, similar to what EDA has historically achieved with the Appalachian Regional Commission.

NTIA has also coordinated with regional federal commissions, including the NBRC, to promote awareness of resources that can support broadband. The NBRC, as well as the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority, publish information about programs that can support broadband through NTIA's BroadbandUSA Federal Funding site. As NTIA implements the grant programs, it will coordinate with these regional commissions to promote outreach and to provide technical assistance to facilitate participation by smaller jurisdictions.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

Question. Thank you for committing to work to address the ongoing needs of Oregon and other western states who are struggling to recover from the damage of the 2020 wildfire season. While FEMA has delivered substantial emergency relief to Oregon, I believe the scale of natural disasters in Oregon and other western states demands additional resources that can only be delivered through disaster supplemental legislation.

What does the Department estimate was the economic impact of the 2020 wildfire season on the national and the Oregon economy? In your answer, please address the specific impact that wildfire smoke has on small businesses.

Answer. As part of NOAA's January 2021 Billion Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters report we estimate the costs from the Western Wildfires were $16.5 billion. However, this represents a conservative estimate only capturing direct costs of residential, commercial and automotive losses and wildfire suppression costs. Regarding indirect costs, it is unclear how much economic and/or physical damage that the persistent wildfire smoke and very poor air quality caused to small businesses and public health across the western United States during 2020. The downstream economic impact of wildfire smoke on both natural capital and dependent economic sectors is not captured in our analysis.

Specific to Oregon, in 2020, the state's residential, commercial and automotive insured, direct losses to wildfire approached a record $3 billion in paid claims according to the National Interagency Fire Center. In addition, the National Interagency Fire Center estimates that wildfire suppression costs for the western United States were collectively near $2.5 billion. Most of this was in California, but Oregon's proportion was $350 million.

The 2020 Western Wildfire season represents a troubling trend, exacerbated by climate change, as it joins 2017 and 2018 as one of the most destructive and costly U.S. wildfire seasons on record. Each of these years had insured losses roughly ten times greater than the annual average wildfire insured loss over the last several decades.

Question. It is widely anticipated that 2021 will be another difficult fire season. How is the Department preparing for upcoming wildfire season?

Answer. The ongoing, expanding drought across much of the West has ushered in another impactful wildfire season this year. NOAA provides critical support to wildland firefighting agencies at the federal, state, and local levels—including FEMA, U.S. Forest Service, and Interior Department—to prepare for, respond to, and where possible, mitigate impacts in the following ways:

—NOAA continues to provide daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal "fire weather" warnings, forecasts, and outlooks to our partners and the public to anticipate, prepare for, and fight wildfires;

—Our forecasters, using data and information from our global observation network on the ground, in the ocean, sky, and space, have been monitoring and reporting on the development of the western drought and other weather and climate influences on wildfire ignition and development;

—NOAA's Incident Meteorologist (IMet) forecasters provide on-site weather support for large wildfires, as they are requested by our federal partners;

—NOAA's scientists and researchers continue to improve and develop the models used to predict wildfire smoke dispersion, such as the High-Resolution Rapid Refresh-Smoke model, and the weather that drives wildfire behavior and spread; and

—NOAA research contributes to understanding of human health impacts from wildfire smoke by providing a 72-hour air quality forecast that includes smoke from forest fires for the contiguous United States, Alaska and Hawaii. This information is used by local air quality forecasters to warn the population of unhealthy atmospheric conditions.

Continued investment in NOAA satellites, fire weather modeling, and climate science, will enhance the information and support we can provide to our frontline partners.

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority), an independent authority within the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, also works closely with first responders on the state, local, federal, territorial, and tribal levels to support their public safety broadband needs when responding to major emergencies and natural disasters such as wildfires.

The FirstNet Authority learned early on from public safety feedback that first responders need to be able to access the network wherever they go-in urban, suburban, rural, and wilderness environments alike. As part of our solution for rural and wilderness coverage needs for wildfire support, the FirstNet Authority, in partnership with its contractor, AT&T, offers FirstNet-subscribed agencies access to a dedicated fleet of over 100 portable network deployable assets at no extra cost. These mobile cell sites link to FirstNet via satellite, do not rely on commercial power availability, provide similar capabilities and connectivity as a cell tower, and thus can boost coverage during disasters like wildfires.

Additionally, the FirstNet Authority has established a Wildland Fire Focus Group ahead of the 2021 fire season in order to consult with fire response professionals at all levels of government, in an effort to inform the evolution of and future potential investments in the network through a better understanding of broadband efforts among the Wildland Fire community. This group will build use cases based on the information collected from these efforts to better educate the fire community how broadband, and specifically FirstNet, can assist in performing their mission.

Finally, NIST continues its sustained efforts to understand and derive recommendations from past wildland urban interface (WUI) fires. In January of 2021, NIST released its findings from reconnaissance of the 2018 Camp Fire in California where there were 85 fatalities and almost 19,000 structures were destroyed. As a direct consequence of that reconnaissance, NIST has ongoing experimental research to study structure-to-structure fire spread and the role of materials and building code regulations on WUI fire hazard and loss of property. Results from NIST's reconstruction of that event are already being incorporated into California building and fire codes for communities exposed to wildland fires. After completing the fire progression timeline, the focus of the reconstruction expanded to address aspects of evacuation, emergency notification, fire suppression, and structure protection. Although these efforts are not limited to the 2021 fire season, they are helping mitigate the impact of wildland fires on our built environment and our communities in the long term.

Question. Our Oregon groundfish fishermen are committed to sustainable fishing practices that maintain healthy fish populations and support our maritime economy. As part of their participation in the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program, these fisherman are individually responsible for paying for monitoring both at-sea and at the seafood processor—at the cost of $500-$700 per day per vessel. These monitoring programs are cost-prohibitive and disproportionately impacting our small fisherman, who are already struggling due to the economic impacts of COVID–19. While the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission reimburses for at-sea monitoring, no such program exists for the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

a. What would be the barriers to expanding reimbursements for at-sea monitoring to include the Oregon groundfish fishery?

b. Will you commit to reviewing this program to ensure an equitable and just system to support all of our American groundfish fishermen?

Answer. Yes, I commit to looking into this IFQ program.

In addition to the longstanding industry-funded monitoring of the Alaska groundfish fishery, both the West Coast and Northeast groundfish fisheries have requirements for industry-funded monitoring to ensure accurate accounting of discards in their catch share fisheries. These requirements were recommended by the Pacific and New England Fishery Management Councils and implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approximately ten years ago, after extensive development through the Council process and with full participation by fishery stakeholders.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission reimburses Northeast industry monitoring costs using funds Congress has specifically appropriated to NMFS for this purpose. Currently, there is not a similar appropriation for the West Coast fishery, or any other U.S. fishery, including the Alaska groundfish fishery.

NMFS has been working with Oregon trawl fishermen and the Pacific Council to incorporate electronic monitoring (EM) as an alternative to observers to meet the requirements for 100-percent at-sea monitoring in the current industry-funded Trawl Catch Share Program. By EM service providers' own estimates, EM is expected to reduce at-sea monitoring costs by 30 percent. EM will be an option for all West Coast groundfish trawl vessels beginning in January 2022.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN

Question. The FY21 Appropriations bill included report language in line with my Built to Last Act that directs the Department (NIST) to identify a consistent and authoritative set of climate information that emphasizes forward-looking climate data that should be utilized in the building code standard-setting process. Please provide an update on NIST's implementation, including any coordination with NOAA.

Answer. NIST's FY2022 budget requests would provide an additional $20M for expanded efforts in Climate and Energy Measurements, Tools, and Testbeds and $4M of these funds will directly support research to provide building codes and standards that would help new construction be more resilient to future weather extremes. As part of these efforts NIST will continue to coordinate work with NOAA and other appropriate federal agencies to identify climate information that emphasizes forward-looking climate data and projections that are most applicable in the standard-setting process. The NIST budget request for new staff, equipment for structural testing, and grants and contracts for data collection builds on current NIST investments in programs such as community resilience, fire risk reduction, windstorm impact reduction, and disaster and failure studies. A NIST workshop earlier this year brought stakeholders in the building codes and standards community together with those in the climate science community to initiate these discussions. NIST continues to meet with leadership from important partners like the International Code Council that will implement any new standards. NIST is leveraging its National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP) interagency Windstorm Working Group as a forum to exchange information with the NOAA climate community and other federal agencies.

Question. Please describe the Department of Commerce's proposals for resilient infrastructure included in the American Jobs Plan and FY22 budget request, including how these proposals will benefit infrastructure throughout the country-not just in states along the coasts.

Answer. NIST, NOAA, and EDA are actively engaged in various efforts to support resilient infrastructure.

As the recent tragedy in Surfside, FL has demonstrated, the built environment is critical to safety, economic security, and quality of life. On June 30, NIST launched a technical investigation to determine the cause of the collapse of the Champlain Towers South using the authorities of the National Construction Safety Team (NCST) Act of 2002. Under the NCST Act, NIST is authorized to conduct technical investigations of building failures following events that have a large loss of life or the potential for a significant loss of life. First applied to the World Trade Center investigation, NIST is also currently conducting a significant technical investigation of the effects of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico to better understand how the buildings and infrastructure failed, and how we can prevent such failures in the future. The findings of the Champlain Towers South Collapse investigation will inform recommendations for improvements to building codes, standards, and practices. While NIST is non-regulatory, the agency will work with stakeholders to implement the recommendations.

NIST is committed to conducting the necessary measurement science that will establish a technical basis for stronger codes, standards, and practices for the Nation's buildings and infrastructure. The President's FY 2022 Budget Request includes an increase of $20 million to expand NIST research and development related to climate and energy, including building resiliently for the changing climate through research supporting building codes and standards. The American Jobs Plan proposes significant growth in the NIST laboratories of $4 billion over ten years, including approximately $100 million to expand efforts to develop measurements and standards to help communities prepare for and respond to climate change.

In addition to the NCST Act investigations, NIST has several ongoing activities supporting resilient infrastructure:

First, NIST's Disaster Resilience research programs conduct applied research on the effects of hazards, including windstorms, earthquakes, and wildfires, on our buildings, infrastructure, and commerce. For example, the NIST Community Resilience Planning Guide provides a practical and flexible approach to help all communities improve their resilience by setting priorities and allocating resources to manage risks for their prevailing hazards. The Community Resilience Economic Decision Guide also provides a standard economic methodology for evaluating investment decisions aimed at improving the ability of communities to adapt to, withstand, and quickly recover from disruptive events. NIST continues to work on developing tools that can be implemented by communities for effective resilience planning.

Second, NIST also coordinates closely with other federal agencies to make major, measurable reductions in loss of life and property as a result of natural hazards. NIST is the lead agency for the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP) and the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). Both programs coordinate federal efforts to make the Nation more resilient to windstorms and earthquakes, respectively, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the United States Geological Survey (USGS).

Finally, as a non-regulatory agency, NIST experts actively participate in consensus processes to advance codes and standards, including the International Code Council, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the National Fire Protection Association, ASTM International, and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers. NIST efforts covering a range of hazards including windstorms, earthquakes and wildfires support community resilience across the Nation. For example, the NIST Community Resilience Center of Excellence, the Center for Risk-Based Community Resilience Planning, is a multi-disciplinary team of experts in engineering, economics, data and computing, and social sciences led by Colorado State University. The center is developing a computational tool to allow users to optimize community disaster resilience planning specific to their local environmental hazards.

NOAA's climate science informs efforts to support infrastructure and efficient operations in many sectors of the economy, including ports, shipping, agriculture, seafood and fishing, and tourism and recreation, which contribute to more than one-third of the U.S. GDP. NOAA already plays an important role in strengthening and protecting infrastructure, and it will continue to do so under the American Jobs Plan. NOAA will support infrastructure investment in at least three ways.

First, NOAA will continue to provide climate data, tools, and services to federal agencies, state and local governments, territories, tribes, and the commercial sector to make informed decisions for new infrastructure investments and make existing assets more resilient to climate change. As described in our FY 2022 Budget Request, NOAA is investing in our internal capacity to better respond to the needs of vulnerable populations, assessing key services to identify and address barriers to access for all Americans, funding targeted investments in historically underserved communities, and enhancing NOAA's capabilities, such as our award-winning Weather and Climate Toolkit, the Climate Resilience Toolkit, and the Sea Level Rise Viewer.

Second, NOAA provides climate services across America—on each coast, along the Great Lakes, and in the heartlands—through its Regional Integrated Science and Assessment (RISA) teams, the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), Sea Grant extension agents, Regional Climate Centers, Coastal Zone Managers, and others, who provide coastal and inland communities with the tools, information, and services needed to prepare for and adapt to climate change. NOAA's FY 2022 Budget Request proposes significant investments in NOAA programs that connect scientists and local decision makers around climate resilience, such as the RISA Program, which is prioritizing building climate adaptation capacity in frontline communities, as well as efforts to restore coastal habitats and protect communities, such as the National Coastal Resilience Fund.

Third, NOAA will continue to empower local communities and mobilize the next generation of workers addressing climate solutions through grants, fellowships, and training opportunities to support infrastructure projects, which bolsters community resilience to storms and can enhance absorption of excess carbon dioxide. For example, NOAA's early warning system and decision-support tools for extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and severe precipitation, help communities avoid the worst, most expensive impacts from these events, which saves lives, property, and money. NOAA will continue to work with NIST to provide the long-range weather and climate information needed to support standards-setting efforts to make the Nation's infrastructure more resilient to windstorms, storm surge, and severe weather. NOAA's goal, as reflected in our FY 2022 Budget Request, is to scale up efforts to research the climate system and inform solutions to the climate crisis through investments in research, observations and forecasting, restoration and resilience.

Finally, EDA has long prioritized infrastructure investments that incorporate resilience principles. This includes a long-standing investment priority focused on "recovery and resilience," guidelines for Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies that recommend inclusion of resiliency into regional planning, and inclusion in Notices of Funding Opportunity preference for projects that incorporate resiliency principles. All of these factors combine to ensure that EDA-funded projects are designed to provide economic benefits to a community or region and anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from various disruptions to its economic base.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CHRISTOPHER MURPHY

Question. This Congress, I will be reintroducing the Living Shorelines Act, which establishes a new federal grant program to support the construction of living shorelines. Living shorelines are a type of coastal resiliency project that not only protects shorelines against storm surges and rising sea levels, but helps restore coastal habitats.

In the American Rescue Plan, President Biden noted that the "plan will protect and, where necessary, restore nature based infrastructure" and called on "Congress to invest in protection from extreme wildfires, coastal resilience to sea-level rise and hurricanes...".

Given the synergies between these expressed goals and living shoreline projects, does the administration support programs that directly fund living shorelines projects?

Answer. Yes, NOAA supports living shoreline projects by providing financial and technical assistance to coastal communities through existing programs. The National Coastal Resilience Fund is a partnership between NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that funds projects that protect coastal communities while enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, including living shorelines projects. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) conducts and funds research on the effectiveness, siting, and co-benefits of living shorelines and provides decision-support tools and guidance for coastal managers. Additionally, the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation's Community-based Restoration Program provides funds for the use of living shoreline and related techniques for marine and coastal habitat restoration.

NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training (B–WET) program also funds projects that allow K–12 teachers and students to investigate local environmental issues, which include activities that enable them to support and restore living shorelines as well as learn about its importance.

The President's FY 2022 discretionary funding request includes $6.9 billion for NOAA, an increase of more than $1.4 billion, or 22% over the FY 2021 enacted level. This unprecedented funding level is indicative of the Administration's support for NOAA programs, in particular, to allow NOAA to expand its climate observation and forecasting work and provide better data and information to decision-makers, support coastal resilience programs that would help protect communities from the economic and environmental impacts of climate change, and invest in modern infrastructure—including living shorelines and other nature-based systems—to enable these critical efforts.

Furthermore, the President's American Jobs Plan recommends $50 billion in dedicated investments to improve infrastructure resilience, which includes the restoration of nature-based infrastructure to maximize the resilience of land and water resources to protect communities and the environment.

Question. As you know, manufacturing is a major driver of employment and economic activity in Connecticut and throughout New England. This includes companies of all sizes operating up and down the supply chain. In the American Rescue Plan, President Biden stated "President Biden believes we must produce, here at home, the technologies and goods that meet today's challenges and seize tomorrow's opportunities." How will you leverage your role as Secretary to assist with a whole of government approach to streamlining efforts to allow small & medium sized manufacturers access to contracts and other federal procurement processes?

Answer. The President's Executive Order 14005—Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers—charges federal agencies with partnering with Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) for supplier scouting to identify U.S. companies that can produce goods, products, and materials in the United States that meet federal procurement needs. I fully support this approach and will continue to examine additional ways to streamline efforts so that American small- and medium-sized manufacturers can access contracts and other federal procurement processes.

In addition, under the President's leadership, I have prioritized the Department's work on supply chain resilience. As we are seeing now, when shortages occur, they can be especially harmful to small- and medium-sized manufacturers. Under Executive Order 14017—America's Supply Chains, the Department drafted a 100-day report analyzing the semiconductor industry supply chain and identifying areas to improve resilience. The proposed semiconductor grant program included in the NDAA could directly support small- and medium-sized semiconductor manufacturers and allow the Department to further address the supply chain weaknesses which have led to the current chips shortage. In the American Jobs Plan, the President has proposed institutionalizing this function of the Department through a new supply chain resilience program.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE MANCHIN, III

COORDINATION OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS

Question. Previous packages have included considerable amounts of money that can be used for infrastructure. I fought hard to make broadband, water, and sewer eligible expenses for communities that don't have major outstanding COVID expenses. That represents $350 billion for state and local assistance, as well as an additional $10 billion for critical capital projects like broadband. I can tell you from talking to many of these city and county officials over the past few months that they are ecstatic about these funds. It's the first time they have control of their future in their own hands. At the same time, we need to make sure that we are making smart investments with these funds. The President's plan includes $111 billion for water infrastructure as well as $100 billion for broadband.

Taken together, that's more than half a trillion dollars toward some of our most pressing infrastructure needs.

How much funding has been provided in previous coronavirus relief packages for infrastructure?

Answer. As of July 11, EDA has invested over $239.4 million in CARES Act funding on 93 infrastructure projects to help communities recover from the pandemic and to become more resilient to future economic shocks. These figures will rise as EDA continues to obligate its CARES Act funding. Additionally, EDA expects a significant amount of its $3 billion ARP Act appropriation to be used to fund infrastructure.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, included $1 billion for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, $300 million for the Broadband Infrastructure Program, and $285 million for the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. The American Rescue Plan included state and local emergency relief funding, some of which may be used for broadband infrastructure. Other Commerce programs have received smaller infrastructure-related appropriations, including Manufacturing USA and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

Question. How are you going to build on the funding we have already provided in an infrastructure bill?

Answer. The funding we have received is an important step forward, but our communities need further resources to give every American access to essential infrastructure, such as broadband, which is now as essential as electricity to our everyday life.

Under President Biden's American Jobs Plan, we will have the resources to deploy high-quality broadband infrastructure to every community across the country, allowing millions of Americans to better participate in our modern economy and society.

EDA strategically invested funds under the CARES Act to build future capacity. Those investments are already beginning to show results as EDA is anticipating robust demand for its ARP Act and regular program funds.

NTIA has established the National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM), a platform for data collection, visualization, and analysis of federal, state, and commercially available data sets, which will help in identifying discrepancies in broadband availability for the purpose of informing policy and federal funding decisions. NTIA has integrated more than 388 data layers/services from 43 sources (over 2.6 TB of data) that collectively inform policy and investment decision making.

Some of the sources include: Federal—FCC/USAC (477 Deployment, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)) grant eligibility, Connect America Fund Phase II (CAFII), High Cost Universal Broadband (HUBB) portal, USDA (ReConnect program data), Census (American Community Survey data), Treasury (Opportunity Zones); Commercial (MLAB and Ookla speed test, BroadbandNow pricing data, White Star Parcel Data); and data from many state governments.

NTIA has agreements with 37 states, including West Virginia and more to be announced soon, as well as access to state level information providing an additional layer of broadband data. NTIA has also partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, EDA, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to support their broadband programs. With that data, NBAM is becoming a resource for addressing the specific issues you raised. NTIA is committed to further investment in NBAM to ensure the most effective use of federal funds as well as to inform state broadband investments as we have seen significant state investment since 2019.

Question. How are you going to coordinate with local communities, states, and other agencies to ensure that this funding addresses our long-term needs?

Answer. EDA has a long history, through its Economic Development Integration business practice, of successfully coordinating local stakeholders and other federal agencies to ensure that federal investments are coordinated and impactful, while meeting local needs. EDA expects to continue this practice under the ARP Act and with any future Congressional appropriations.

NTIA has a history of successful coordination with multiple levels of government. Through its BroadbandUSA work, NTIA has served local, state, territorial, and tribal governments, industry and non-profits seeking to expand broadband connectivity and promote digital inclusion by providing solution-neutral technical assistance and convening regional workshops that bring local stakeholders together. NTIA also addressed these issues through its State Broadband Leaders Network (SBLN), a cohort of government officials representing the 50 states and three territories that focus on state level broadband and digital inclusion efforts. NTIA has also recently established a Digital Inclusion Leaders Network to address digital equity and inclusion issues.

NTIA has also paid special attention to Tribal broadband deployment. Recognizing the special nature of the Nation-to-Nation relationship, NTIA held three virtual Tribal Consultation sessions to hear from Tribal Leaders, which informed the design of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and is committed to continuing a respectful dialogue as the grant program is implemented. NTIA held a total of four Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program-specific webinars with a cumulative total of 1,415 registrants to help prospective applicants understand the grant program and to assist applicants to prepare high quality grant applications. NTIA will offer additional webinars to continue outreach efforts and answer questions from prospective applicants. Additional outreach includes communications with Tribal leaders and Tribal stakeholder organizations, including outreach regarding the funding opportunity to every Tribal nation, more than 350 Tribal contacts that previously applied for 2.5Ghz spectrum licenses and in-person participation at the 2021 Inter-Tribal Emergency Management Summit in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Questions Submitted by Senator Susan M. Collins

large-scale advanced manufacturing

Question. The University of Maine is becoming a leader in large-scale advanced manufacturing, and it is now the site of one of the largest 3D printers in the world. In fact, UMaine recently broke three Guinness World Records for the world's largest prototype polymer 3D printer, largest solid 3D-printed object, and largest 3D-printed boat. This accelerated rapid prototyping, enabled by high performance computing, can quickly advance R&D efforts in both the defense and civilian arenas. UMaine is now developing a new Factory of the Future concept which would use high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, and additive manufacturing technology to quickly build prototype structures which could ultimately lower the cost of navy vessels and civilian craft, as well as quickly produce low-cost housing units. These are the sorts of cutting-edge, advanced manufacturing technologies and research and design efforts that will keep America competitive globally. How does the Administration's proposal support university-led R&D efforts like UMaine's?

Answer. A primary focus of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) programs is targeted at support for Advanced Manufacturing research and development (R&D). The NIST FY2022 budget provides an additional $275M to support expanded efforts delivered through the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and Manufacturing USA programs. For MEP, their extensive work with numerous universities (18 MEP Centers are part of universities) and the DOD can help support the work of university-led R&D efforts. Through robust strategic partnerships, universities can leverage the expanded footprint and capabilities of NIST programs that work directly with the DOD and American manufacturers. The new Manufacturing USA Technology Roadmaps (MfgTech) program, announced June 23, 2021, provides financial support for universities to partner with industry in developing roadmaps to grow advanced manufacturing in the United States. The NIST laboratory programs support additive manufacturing research in academia, like those at UMaine, through a competitive grants program to accelerate the adoption of new measurement methods and standards. In addition, universities are eligible applicants for EDA funding, including the $3B in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding EDA recently launched. The $1B ARP Build Back Better Regional Challenge, for example, encourages universities to partner with other entities in their region around a vision to accelerate their region's economy.

SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRIAL BASE

Question. Sec. Raimondo, Congress is actively working on legislation that would provide funding for the CHIPS for America Act. Is the Department of Commerce organized to execute these grants in a timely fashion? What criteria are you planning to use to determine which companies will receive them and which won't? In order to produce a more diverse, complex supply chain, would a broad array of smaller grants be a better approach than a smaller number of large grants?

Answer. As you know, the Senate version of the United States Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) appropriates approximately $52 billion to fund the CHIPS for America Act that was included and authorized in the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Department of Commerce is currently working on a detailed plan to implement the programs outlined in the authorizing legislation. We are carefully considering a wide array of options to restore U.S. leadership in semiconductor manufacturing, technology, and R&D, increase market share in leading-edge logic fabrication, maintain market share in overall fabrication capacity, and provide for diversified, resilient domestic supply chain. We are developing criteria based on the guidance outlined in the NDAA with the objective to stimulate proposals that:

—encourage creative consortia of manufacturers and investors-potentially with state and local governments that can raise funds and be partners for long-term reinvestment.

—encourage producers to create coalitions with their suppliers to jointly apply for funds.

—encourage coalitions of chip designers, customers, and manufacturers so that U.S. fabs manufacture cutting-edge chip designs and expand the U.S. microelectronics ecosystem effect for advanced design and production.

—encourage coalitions that build on and reinforce U.S. strengths in design, software, and tools.

—encourage robust workforce development activities.

—leverage our NIST laboratories and use public-private partnerships, like Manufacturing USA, that pull together industry, universities, and academia to strengthen domestic research and development in semiconductor packaging and semiconductor manufacturing.

The specific criteria, and call for proposals when developed, will be disseminated when funding is appropriated by Congress.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROY BLUNT

Question. The President's plan calls for revitalizing manufacturing, securing US supply chains, and investing in R&D, including in biotechnology. The Department of Commerce plays a crucial role in this by protecting US intellectual property and innovation. That is why I am concerned about a proposal from India, South Africa and others at the World Trade Organization to take away the international IP rules for COVID–19 vaccines and other medicines. How does the Administration plan to defend against proposals at the WTO that would threaten US intellectual property? How does the Administration plan to preserve American biopharmaceutical manufacturing and innovation in the future?

Answer. The COVID–19 pandemic is a global health crisis and ending the COVID–19 pandemic across the globe is the Administration's top priority. The extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic call for extraordinary measures, including pursuing text-based negotiations at the WTO on a waiver of intellectual property protections for COVID–19 vaccines, which will take time given the consensus-based nature of the institution and the complexity of the issues involved. The Administration will also continue to ramp up its efforts—working with the private sector and all possible partners—to expand vaccine manufacturing and distribution.

These extraordinary circumstances aside, the Administration remains committed to ensuring that intellectual property protection for U.S. companies remains strong and that the U.S. economy and American innovation are not undermined through IP theft or forced technology transfer. The Administration recognizes that intellectual property rights are a fundamental driver of innovation and investment in the development of new technologies, including new biopharmaceuticals and medical treatments.

The Department of Commerce's Manufacturing USA program is strengthening American biopharmaceutical manufacturing and innovation by sponsoring the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL). NIIMBL brings together over 180 member organizations from industry, academia, and other non-profits in a public-private partnership to ensure that the United States preserves its global leadership in this industry. By developing agile and cost-effective domestic manufacturing methods and associated workforce training that have been externally validated, NIIMBL reduces the incentive to offshore production and supply chains for critical medical products.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN HOEVEN

Question. The Joint Committee on Taxation, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Office of Tax Policy at the Department of Treasury, have for years indicated as a foundational economic understanding, that a large portion of the corporate tax rate is borne by labor, in the form of reduced jobs, and reduced wages.

Has the Department of Commerce estimated how many jobs will be lost, and by how much wages will reduce, due to the corporate tax increase the Administration has proposed?

Answer. The Department of Commerce has not conducted that type of analysis as that is in the purview of other agencies and offices in the Federal Government.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

Question. Regarding the American Rescue Plan, will you follow the traditional algorithm and methods used for the CARES Act funds, distributing the funding equally across EDA's regions?

Answer. This historic and sweeping legislation provides additional relief to address the continued impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on the economy, public health, State and local governments, individuals, and businesses.

The ARP appropriates supplemental funding of $3 billion to EDA to assist communities nation-wide in advancing their coronavirus recovery and resiliency strategies through six Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). As it has with past supplemental appropriations, EDA developed a unique allocation for each NOFO focused on: (1) bringing back the American workforce and industries that have been hardest hit, such as travel and tourism and manufacturing, through programs that support economic growth and diversification, creating talent pipelines to address industry needs, and fostering higher-skill, higher-wage job opportunities for all; (2) capitalizing on American ingenuity to build regions of the future by focusing on innovation-led economic development, including planning, infrastructure, workforce development, and business financing; and (3) pursuing a comprehensive approach to advancing equity by focusing on populations and underserved communities that have been denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity.

Due to the size of the appropriation and the comparatively short amount of time Congress provided to obligate the funds, EDA allocated the ARP funding somewhat differently than past supplementals while continuing to ensure a good regional distribution of the funds.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CINDY HYDE-SMITH

Question. Congress is actively working on legislation that would provide funding for the CHIPS act. How organized is the Department of Commerce to execute these grants in a timely fashion?

Answer. As you know, the Senate version of the United States Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) appropriates approximately $52 billion to fund the CHIPS for America Act that was included in the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This funding, if passed by Congress, will support an integrated set of programs that will restore U.S. leadership in semiconductor manufacturing and R&D, increase market share in leading-edge logic fabrication, maintain market share in overall fabrication capacity, while providing for diversified, resilient domestic supply chain. The Department of Commerce has an integrated planning team drawing expertise from multiple bureaus and is working to address both the operational and program design needs so the Department will be ready to implement the program when the funding is appropriated.

Question. What criteria will be used to determine which companies will receive CHIPS Act grants and which will not?

Answer. The Department of Commerce is currently working on a detailed plan to implement the programs outlined in the authorizing legislation. We are carefully considering a wide array of options to restore U.S. leadership in semiconductor manufacturing and R&D, increase market share in leading-edge logic fabrication, maintain market share in overall fabrication capacity, and providing for diversified, resilient domestic supply chain. We developing criteria based on the guidance outlined in the NDAA with the objective to stimulate proposals that:

—encourage creative consortia of manufacturers and investors-potentially with state and local governments that can raise funds and be partners for long-term reinvestment.

—encourage producers to create coalitions with their suppliers to jointly apply for funds.

—encourage coalitions of chip designers, customers, and manufacturers so that U.S. fabs manufacture cutting-edge chip designs and expand the U.S. microelectronics ecosystem effect for advanced design and production.

—encourage coalitions that build on and reinforce U.S. strengths in design, software, and tools.

—encourage robust workforce development activities.

The specific criteria, and call for proposals when developed, will be disseminated when funding is appropriated by Congress.

Question. The CHIPS grants are specifically intended to incentivize semiconductor manufacturing companies to produce onshore and create a diverse, complex secure supply chain. Will you commit to the committee that this intention will be executed to distribute a broad array of grants to as many eligible companies as possible and not just a select few?

Answer. In planning for USICA, we are considering a wide array of options that includes companies of different sizes in all sectors of the semiconductor value chain. The Department is designing the program to incentivize the construction and expansion of facilities to restore U.S. leadership in semiconductor manufacturing and R&D.

I can commit to the committee that we intend to distribute a broad array of grants which will benefit all sectors of the semiconductor value chain.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

Question. Congress recently appropriated massive sums for various broadband-related purposes, including $3.2 billion in subsidies for low-income Americans in the recent COVID–19 relief bill. The FCC has queued up additional funding, such as the billions of dollars in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. While the specifics of the Administration's plans have not yet been relayed to Congress, it does seem as if many of the topline figures were chosen purely to shock and without regard for need.

How will the Department of Commerce ensure that broadband spending proposed by the Administration does not duplicate funds that have already been authorized or appropriated?

Answer. The recently passed ACCESS BROADBAND Act (Act) established new obligations on NTIA, USDA, and the FCC, which will help to analyze and quantify the funding made available for broadband. The law requires NTIA to: 1) track the construction and use of and access to any broadband infrastructure built using any federal support in a central database; 2) coordinate with other federal agencies to ensure funds are being distributed in an efficient, tech-neutral, and financially sustainable manner; and 3) not duplicate other federal broadband programs or Universal Service Funds (USF). NTIA is in the process of standing up the database and is working with federal partners to develop the reporting mechanisms that will be necessary to populate the database.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, also included the Broadband Interagency Coordination Act of 2020, which requires NTIA, FCC, and USDA enter into an agreement requiring coordination for the distribution of funds for broadband deployment under the FCC High-Cost Programs, USDA Rural Utilities Service Programs and broadband programs administered or coordinated through NTIA within

180 days of enactment. On June 25, 2021, NTIA, USDA and the FCC announced that the three agencies had signed an interagency agreement committing to data-sharing and coordination

In addition to federal coordination, NTIA has established the National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM). The NBAM is a platform for data collection, visualization, and analysis of federal, state, and commercially available data sets to identify discrepancies in broadband availability for the purpose of informing policy and federal funding decisions. NTIA has integrated more than 388 data layers/services from 43 sources (over 2.6 TB of data) that collectively inform policy and investment decision making.

Some of the sources include: Federal—FCC/USAC (477 Deployment, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)) grant eligibility, Connect America Fund Phase II (CAFII), High Cost Universal Broadband (HUBB) portal, USDA (ReConnect program data), Census (American Community Survey data), Treasury (Opportunity Zones); Commercial (MLAB and Ookla speed test, BroadbandNow pricing data, White Star Parcel Data); and data from many state governments.

Question. In reading the Administration's outline, I was struck by the emphasis on government-owned and operated telecommunications networks. The history of American success and leadership in telecommunications is defined by private-sector-led innovation and investment. Government networks, on the other hand, have a history of failure in which everyday citizens are left with the bill for the failures of bureaucratic planning.

What steps will your department take to ensure that private companies, which have led the way in broadband deployment and investment, are not disadvantaged for contracts and awards in favor of government alternatives?

Answer. As Secretary of Commerce, I am committed to bringing business to the table in partnership to solve some of our biggest problems, including broadband. I have a track record of working with business, and of holding them accountable. They are a critical partner given their longstanding investments in telecommunications networks.

However, there are still millions of Americans for whom broadband remains unavailable due to either lack of infrastructure or excessive cost for the service. Broadband brings residents into the internet consumer market, the work-from-home labor market, and the remote education market. The expansion of markets and access to education arguably create a gap between the public or economy-wide benefits of connecting all Americans with broadband and the revenue private providers can recover. The lack of infrastructure and excessive cost for the service are the areas that require greater support to ensure the full deployment of broadband infrastructure and its adoption by communities.

Given the history of private sector investment in telecommunications infrastructure, I am confident that there will be a role for the private sector to play in current and future broadband infrastructure programs. At the same time, other entities that can demonstrate the requisite expertise to successfully implement a project will be given the opportunity to compete for the privilege of bringing all Americans the benefits of broadband.

To that end, on June 23, 2021, I sent a letter to the broadband trade associations requesting support from broadband service providers to voluntarily submit maps of their service areas to NTIA. This data will be used to better assess broadband availability across the country, and particularly in rural areas.

Question. What steps will the department take to remove regulatory and other barriers that discourage additional private-sector activity in broadband buildout, including for 5G, so that more Americans can receive coverage without further, unwarranted government spending?

Answer. NTIA has facilitated interagency coordination to streamline federal permitting processes to make it easier for network builders and service providers to access federal assets and rights-of-way, reducing the regulatory burden and simplifying the deployment of broadband networks.

NTIA is responsible for coordinating with other agencies to implement the broadband permitting reforms called for in the MOBILE NOW Act, which include developing application tracking procedures, speeding application reviews and approvals, expediting renewals, and prioritizing permits in previously -disturbed rights-of-way.

In addition, NTIA provides information about all agencies' permitting processes on its BroadbandUSA site to provide easier, "one-stop" access to the information. The site includes information about agency fees associated with permitting infrastructure on federal lands, information about the Department of Energy permitting processes, and permitting process improvements made by the Department of Defense.

Finally, NTIA also advises the General Services Administration (GSA) on their implementation of Executive Order 13821, Streamlining and Expediting Requests to Locate Broadband Facilities in Rural America, which requires the agency to collect and report to the Office of Management and Budget on the number of federal agency permits and the associated timeframes to process them.

Question. It also strikes me as odd that the President's infrastructure outline does contain a single mention of 5G and the need to lead in the development and deployment of advanced wireless services.

Would you agree that it is vitally important to our economic health for the U.S. to be on the leading edge of wireless innovation?

Answer. The Administration considers the transition to 5G and future generations of wireless deployment a very high priority. The United States is home to some of the world's largest telecommunications companies, and the Administration is actively working to ensure that this industry can continue to innovate and win on a level playing field, both domestically and globally.

Advances in network technology and open, interoperable approaches like Open RAN (radio access network), offer a potential future with a variety of software and hardware vendors and the ability for operators to disaggregate their networks between multiple vendors using open interfaces. Decoupling what have generally been integrated hardware and software telecommunications solutions from a limited number of global vendors could, in turn, lower today's high barriers to entry in telecommunications equipment markets, unlocking participation by a much wider range of potential vendors. The Administration, therefore, fully supports industry's development of open, interoperable networks while recognizing the importance of maintaining a full suite of solutions offered by incumbent trusted vendors. This can provide network operators with additional options and play to the strengths of U.S. companies, including in software development.

As you know, the USICA appropriates $1.5 billion for the Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund, which was authorized by the FY2021 NDAA. This funding, if

passed by Congress, will support efforts to promote and deploy technologies that will enhance U.S. competitiveness in 5G and future generations of wireless technology.

Question. Is continued American leadership in 5G and future generations of broadband development and deployment a priority for this Administration?

Answer. The Administration considers the transition to 5G and future generations of wireless deployment a very high priority. The United States has developed a coordinated, whole of government strategy to ensure American leadership in the development and deployment of secure, resilient 5G networks. The Department's technical expertise is part of an Administration-wide effort to ensure that 5G and future generations of telecommunications standards are developed through transparent, industry-led, consensus-based processes.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO SECRETARY MARCIA L. FUDGE

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY CHAIRMAN PATRICK LEAHY

NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES INVESTMENT ACT

I commend the proposal to establish a long-term funding source for owned homes through the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act proposal, which would mimic the tremendous success of funding sources like the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program. In Vermont, over 70 percent of people live in homes that they own, but many of them are in extremely poor shape. Home prices are rising fast, shutting first time buyers out of the market. I want to ensure that these new tax credits will work well for rural areas, where the face of poverty can look very different than in a city or suburb.

Question. Will rural states be able to use their local expertise to target low-income housing investments via programs like the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, as they can do for LIHTC?

Answer. HUD's understanding of the text of the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, as introduced, is that it requires each state's neighborhood homes credit agency to maintain a qualified allocation plan that sets forth the agency's allocation priorities, similar to what is required for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. Thus, each state would be able to tailor the neighborhood homes credit to its needs, rural or otherwise. This bill, if enacted, would amend the Internal Revenue Code and thus be administered at the Federal level by the Treasury Department.

The Administration's proposal for Neighborhood Homes Investment Credits (NHICs) requires that NHICs be allocated among the States with an emphasis on "populations living in distressed urban, suburban, and *rural* neighborhoods" (emphasis added). Treasury and HUD would have to establish not only criteria for identifying distressed neighborhoods to which the credits will generally be targeted but also criteria to select additional rural communities and gentrifying census tracts for owner-occupied rehabilitation. Similar to what is required for Low-Income Housing Credits, each State Neighborhood Homes Credit Agency would establish its own qualified allocation plan to guide it in allocating potential NHICs among competing proposals. Thus, each State could tailor allocation of the new credits to its particular needs, rural or otherwise. This proposal, if enacted, would create a new tax credit in the Internal Revenue Code and thus would be administered at the Federal level by the Treasury Department.

SHARED EQUITY AND HOMEOWNERSHIP

As in many rural places, homeownership in Vermont is critical. Over 70 percent of people own their homes and the state has implemented widely praised homeownership efforts like shared equity homeownership programs, but there is still a significant need.

Question. How can this Federal funding ensure affordable access to homeownership, especially for first time homebuyers who are facing the most expensive housing markets in years?

Answer. These shared equity homeownership programs can help their homebuyers so that more people from marginalized communities can benefit from shared equity homeownership. Through the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP), HUD awards grants to eligible national and regional nonprofit organizations and consortia to purchase home sites and develop or improve the infrastructure needed to set the stage for sweat equity and volunteer-based homeownership programs for low-income persons or families. SHOP units are sold to homebuyers at prices below the prevailing market price.

The HOME Program provides financing to acquire, rehabilitate, or newly construct modest housing for occupancy by low-income households. HOME also provides direct assistance to homebuyers in the form of downpayment and closing cost assistance or other secondary financing, alone or in combination with construction activities. HUD's FY 2022 budget request includes a $100 million set-aside for States to provide downpayment assistance to first-generation and/or low-wealth first-time homebuyers who traditionally have not had access to homeownership.

HUD also believes that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) can play a part in this and are assessing our policies to alleviate regulatory burdens and to improve access to FHA-insured financing through a variety of initiatives. For example, the 2022 President's Budget proposes the Home Equity Accelerator Loan (HEAL) pilot program under FHA. The pilot program is designed specifically to provide more opportunities for homeownership to first-generation and/or low-wealth first-time homebuyers.

Question. How will HUD ensure that any Federal funding for new homeowners reaches those who have been previously excluded from the housing market?

Answer. HUD recognizes the continued need to provide opportunities for homeownership throughout the country. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP), and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) play critical roles in providing such opportunities to those who have traditionally been excluded from the housing market.

As part of the budget, HUD has proposed to implement a Home Equity Accelerator Loan (HEAL) pilot program under FHA. The pilot program is designed specifically to provide more opportunities for homeownership to first-generation and/or low-wealth first-time homebuyers. HEAL will offer loan products that lower barriers to homeownership, including incentives to lenders and borrowers.

The Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) increases homeownership for those who are low-income and contribute a significant amount of sweat equity towards the development of the SHOP units. Reasonable accommodations are permitted for individuals with disabilities in order for individuals to meet hourly sweat equity requirements. More specifically, SHOP funds are used for eligible expenses to develop decent, safe and sanitary non-luxury housing for low-income persons and families who otherwise would not be able to afford to become homeowners.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) allocates funds by formula to states and local governments to fund the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of homeownership housing for low- and very low-income households. The program provides flexibility for HOME participating jurisdictions to design and administer homeownership programs that meet their locally identified needs and priorities, including through shared equity models. HOME can be used to construct or rehabilitate housing for homeownership in areas with inadequate supply or substandard housing conditions, or to provide direct assistance to homebuyers where housing prices, credit history, and/or limited ability to save for a significant downpayment are obstacles to entering homeownership. The Administration's FY 2022 budget requests includes a $100 million set-aside within the HOME Program for a new initiative called First HOME Downpayment Assistance. This initiative would focus on populations that have been underserved by targeting first-generation and/or low-wealth first-time homebuyers.

MANUFACTURED HOMES

In rural areas, manufactured homes are an important source of naturally occurring affordable housing, but too often these homeowners can be at risk from natural disasters like floods, deteriorating homes that were built before the establishment of strong Federal standards, and the fact that private park owners can sell the land underneath their largest investment.

Question. How will HUD make sure that these homeowners benefit from these Federal investments and that their investments in their homes help them build and maintain a strong financial foundation?

Answer. HUD's Office of Manufactured Housing Programs (OMHP) executes the regulation, oversight, and monitoring of the manufactured housing industry nationwide, with the mission to preserve and promote the quality, durability, safety, and affordability of manufactured homes, including those in rural and underserved areas. OMHP continues to maintain a focus on quality design and construction and updating Federal standards to reflect current building technologies and evolving consumer demands. HUD has been working to update the standards on a regular basis, to encourage innovation and cost-effective construction techniques for manufactured homes that improve quality, durability, safety, and affordability.

HUD's manufactured housing programs (construction and safety program, dispute resolution program, and home installation program) also work to protect residents of manufactured homes with respect to personal injuries, insurance costs, and property damages in manufactured housing. With the 2008 implementation of new Federal installation standards that includes provisions for flood hazard areas, and recent fire protection standards for zero lot-line or townhome style construction, OMHP monitors the quality and compliance of home installations, which works to improve the performance of manufactured homes and lead to the potential for solid, long-term investments that may appreciate in value similar to other housing stock.

RURAL VILLAGES AND TOWNS

The average town in Vermont has 1,200 people and leadership that is almost all volunteers with full time jobs. These towns are ready to make the investments to update their water, their sewer, their roads, and their zoning and build more housing, and attract young families and new small businesses. But, doing so is a bureaucratic maze. The American Jobs Plan is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for every part of our country.

Question. How can HUD support rural places and small towns in this infrastructure plan? How can we ensure that this funding benefits everyone in the country, not just cities that have already been able to invest in the requirements for shovel-ready projects?

Answer. The $10 billion Community Revitalization Fund included in the American Jobs Plan would target underserved and high-poverty areas in urban, suburban and rural communities and finance community-led revitalization. The Fund would provide support to communities for both the planning and implementation of projects that create equitable, weather- and climate-resilient, healthy neighborhoods that support access to quality affordable housing, services, and recreation and spark strong small businesses and good jobs.

The infrastructure plan includes $500 million for the Main Street Program and proposes resources dedicated to both small and rural places. HUD and USDA will work together to ensure grants and technical assistance helps revitalize small communities and rural areas.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds provide rural places and small towns an opportunity to support local infrastructure projects at various stages of development. The CDBG program reaches approximately 6,000 smaller communities every year and is available to rural places and small towns primarily through the State CDBG program. Through the CDBG program, States and those communities identify their specific community development needs, including infrastructure.

As a formula program that provides state and local governments the option of a broad range of activity types, CDBG does not favor shovel-ready projects in cities at the expense of rural communities' needs. Additional CDBG funds will continue to support infrastructure investments, from the planning to construction phases, in rural areas.

WEATHERIZATION

Our houses are often old, leaky and heated with expensive and environmentally unfriendly methods like fuel oil. I am glad to see a focus on clean energy and weatherizing homes to make sure they are safe and affordable, which Vermont desperately needs. Investments in projects like this often go further when money can be implemented in unique ways, like revolving loan funds, and when partners across housing and energy fields are involved.

Question. How will you ensure that funding for this important effort will be spent most effectively?

Answer. HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes received an appropriation of $5 million in both 2020 and 2021 to be competitively awarded as grants to facilitate coordinated service delivery by HUD's Lead Hazard Reduction grantees and local programs funded by the Department of Energy (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program. HUD awarded five grants with the 2020 funding, out of 21 applications submitted. The Notice of Funding Opportunity, developed with DOE staff input, emphasizes the formation of multiple partnerships in target communities to help identify and recruit households of greatest need and further encourages applicants to develop sustainable program models that can continue coordinated service delivery following expiration of the coordination grants. The 2022 President's Budget includes a request for $5 million for the Healthy Homes and Weatherization Cooperation Demonstration grant. The grant program will receive a formal evaluation to identify the benefits of this approach as well as effective practices that can be adopted by other communities.

The issue of financing energy efficiency in affordable housing is a challenging one, especially in the framework of HUD's public and assisted housing subsidy structure. It is helpful to point out, as in the question, that it is appropriate to explore how direct investments of Federal dollars can be leveraged and maximized by partnering with third party sources, or by tapping the expertise of non-profit and private sector partners to provide the necessary energy and support services.

It is also important to note that some of HUD's more successful programs in this space have relied not on direct financing from HUD but on third-party financing, most directly, the Energy Performance Contract (EPC) program in public housing, which enables public housing agencies to leverage outside financing and pay for the improvements with the savings. The FY22 Budget proposes $50 million to develop new strategies and new approaches to the EPC Program to increase its usage, make deeper green energy and water efficiency measures, develop and implement renewable energy and battery storage, and reduce the carbon and climate impact of public housing.

NORTHERN BORDER REGIONAL COMMISSION (NBRC)

Communities in Vermont, across New England and around the country benefit from the funding and capacity building work of Federal commission and authorities like the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Question. How can the HUD work closely with the NBRC, and other regional commissions, to plan, distribute funding and ensure completion of the investments in the President's proposal?

Answer. HUD has a history of working closely with regional commissions and authorities like the Northern Border Regional Commission. For example, in the Delta Community Capital Initiative and the Appalachia Economic Development Initiative, HUD worked with related authorities—the Delta Regional Authority and Appalachian Regional Commission—and other Federal agency partners, specifically USDA-Rural Development and Treasury's CDFI Fund, to increase organizational capacity of community development organizations to foster economic opportunity within the regions.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

NATURAL DISASTERS, WILDFIRES

Thank you for committing to work to address the ongoing needs of Oregon and other western states that are struggling to recover from the damage of the 2020 wildfire season. In Oregon, wildfires destroyed over 4,000 homes last summer. According to the most recent data, over 1,000 people are still without permanent homes. While FEMA has delivered substantial emergency relief to Oregon, I believe the scale of natural disasters in Oregon and other western states demands additional resources that can only be delivered through disaster supplemental legislation.

Question. Given HUD's role in supporting communities to recovery from presidentially declared disasters, how will the American Jobs Plan support low-income communities in Oregon and other states who are experiencing significant losses as a result of increasingly frequent and extreme natural disasters?

Answer. To address risks associated with the increasing severity and costs of disasters, the American Jobs Plan includes $2.5 billion for HUD's Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)-Resilience program. This investment in vulnerable communities through the CDBG-Resilience program would build on lessons from prior community-scale resilience programs that HUD has administered in the past. HUD would target funding to low- and moderate-income areas with increased risk from climate-related disasters (e.g., floods, hurricanes, wildfires), using HUD data and other Federal data sources, such as FEMA's National Risk Index and the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index.

Question. What does the Department estimate is impact on the housing sector as a result of the 2020 wildfire season? In your answer, please include how many homes or other dwellings that were lost and the impact on the long-term affordability of housing, if possible? What does the Department estimate is the cost to repair or replace that lost housing stock?

Answer. According to the National Interagency Fire Center, in 2020 there were 58,950 wildfires in the United States that burned more than 10 million acres. These fires caused severe damage to residential dwellings.

In contrast to homeowners impacted by flooding events, homeowners generally carry homeowner's insurance which often provides full or partial coverage for fire-induced losses. For this reason, the reinsurance industry is often a good source for data. Munich Reinsurance, reporting on the 2020 fire season, notes the following:

"Once again, a series of large wildfires raged across the western United States in 2020, including record-setting fires (in terms of area burned) in California and Colorado. Drought conditions, particularly across northern California and the Pacific Northwest, helped fuel dozens of large fires. 47 people lost their lives due to the fires.

As of the beginning of December 2020, California had recorded a total of 9,600 wildfires in the state. Although most of these fires were small and did not cause any damage, the severity and extent of the largest fires damaged or destroyed around 10,500 structures. The area burned by wildfire in the state was over four times larger than the 2015–2019 average, and individual fires in 2020 rank 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th on the list of the largest fires in California since the 1930s.

It was notable that damaging wildfires occurred not just in California, but across the rest of the western US as well. Colorado saw its three largest fires, in terms of acres burned, in 2020. Wildfires in Washington and Oregon also set new records. In Oregon alone, about 4,000 homes were damaged or destroyed by wildfires, becoming one of the worst natural disasters in the state's history. In total, losses from the wildfires in the western United States amounted to some US$ 16bn, of which US$ 11bn was insured."[1]

In 2020, based on Census-collected building permit data, California built 50,750 single-family units and 44,000 multifamily units. Oregon built 9,325 single-family units and 6,558 multi-family units. As such, a loss of 10,500 structures in California and 4,000 homes in Oregon are big losses for states that already are struggling to produce enough housing to meet demand.

HUD uses two construction cost indexes to create housing construction cost (HCC) limit (hard costs, builder overhead, and profit) for most metropolitan areas as well as a Total Development Cost (TDC) that also factors in, among other things, administration, site acquisition, relocation, demolition of, and site remediation of environmental hazards. Many of these fires impacted rural areas which tend to have lower costs overall, but such cost data are the best available and still have meaning in this scenario. For Medford Oregon, the HCC in 2020 for a 1,500 square foot home was $213,061 and the TDC was $372,858. In California, HCC tends to range near $250,000 and TDC near $450,000. In sum, the cost to build is high.

[1] https://www.munichre.com/en/company/media-relations/media-information-and-corporate-news/media-information/2021/2020-natural-disasters-balance.html. Downloaded May 13, 2021.

As noted above, most homeowners will recover some or all of their costs to repair or replace their homes from insurance. But some are uninsured or underinsured. FEMA has damage estimates for homes that are uninsured or underinsured.

In 2020, there were three Presidentially Declared major wildfire disasters, one in Oregon and two in California, where FEMA provided Individual Assistance. The following data are derived from FEMA applications for Individual Assistance made available through those three declarations.

Impacted Owner-Occupied Homes and Uninsured Loss Estimates

Data on impact and losses are estimated from FEMA Individual Assistance applications and verified losses. Following wildfire disasters, losses are only verified for homes that do not have insurance or that are under-insured. As such, the number of units with verified losses excludes insured homes with full coverage. A total of 24,114 owner-occupied households applied for FEMA assistance and 3,118 owner-occupied households without sufficient insurance coverage sustained $123,755,805 in verified losses. Approximately three-quarters of the owner-occupied homes with verified losses did not have a homeowners insurance policy, and such homes sustained nearly $80 million in losses. For those with an insurance policy, losses were nearly $44 million.

	Owner-occupied Units with IA Applications	Owner-occupied Units with FEMA Verified Losses	Real Property FEMA Verified Loss
California Wildfire Disaster 4558	11,468	1,005	$54,693,593
Without Home Insurance	5,675	806	$39,854,144
With Home Insurance	5,793	199	$14,839,449
Oregon Wildfire Disaster 4562	7,717	1,738	$51,573,215
Without Home Insurance	3,183	1,232	$27,009,964
With Home Insurance	4,534	506	$24,563,251
California Wildfire 4569	4,929	375	$17,488,998
Without Home Insurance	3,063	322	$13,072,538
With Home Insurance	1,866	53	$4,416,460
TOTAL	24,114	3,118	$123,755,805

Units with Moderate/Major Damage or Destroyed

Overall, among uninsured and under-insured housing units, a total of 1,666 units were destroyed, and nearly a quarter of these were renter-occupied units.

California Wildfire Disaster 4558	581
Owner-occupied	368
Rental	213
Oregon Wildfire Disaster 4562	968
Owner-occupied	818
Rental	150
California Wildfire 4569	117
Owner-occupied	98
Rental	19
Total	1,666
Owner-occupied	1,284
Renter	382

HUD-Assisted Households

No market-wide data on impacts on affordable housing stock could be located within the response time, but HUD program offices produced data on the impacted HUD portfolio. Across the wildfire impacted areas in California and Oregon for which disasters were declared in 2020, the jurisdictions of 64 Public Housing Authorities were affected.

In California, no public housing units were damaged, and 14 households receiving vouchers were displaced due to the disasters. All but two of them have been permanently housed elsewhere. Among multifamily properties, 263 HUD-assisted units sustained moderate or minor damage, but all households have been able to return.

In Oregon, no public housing units were damaged. Of the 75 housing voucher households displaced by the disaster, 15 have yet to be permanently rehoused. Among multifamily properties, 173 assisted units sustained minor damage, but all households have been able to return.

California	Total Units	Damaged
PHA	56	6
PH Units	13,955	
HCV Units	1,888,369	14
Multifamily Properties	1,475	4
Multifamily Units	119,759	263
HUD-Assisted Units	77,176	263
Total HUD Units	1,979,500	277

Oregon	Total	Damaged
PHA	8	4
PH Units	1,428	
HCV Units	12,104	75
Multifamily Properties	165	5
Multifamily Units	8,582	264
HUD-Assisted Units	4,315	173
Total HUD Units	17,847	248

Question. It is widely anticipated that 2021 will be another difficult fire season. How is the Department preparing for the upcoming wildfire season?

Answer. With the increasing number of disaster events, HUD's Disaster Management Group (DMG) meets regularly to ensure that the Department and its stakeholders are prepared for events, such as wildfires. The DMG is comprised of senior leadership from both program and support offices. Prior to the start of hurricane and wildfire seasons, departmental program offices send to HUD-assisted (public housing and multifamily) housing providers preparedness notices to ensure that they have preparedness plans in place, such as evacuation plans. Also, the Department closely monitors weather situations and, in the case of an event, coordinates with its field offices in the impacted areas and FEMA on response and recovery efforts.

NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

Thank you for supporting funding for the National Housing Trust Fund in the American Jobs Plan. I am pleased to see the Administration include my request for this funding.

Question. How does investing in the National Housing Trust Fund advance the President's call to produce, preserve, and retrofit more than two million affordable and sustainable places to live?

Answer. The American Jobs Plan is an investment in America's housing and community infrastructure that will make housing more affordable for working and middle-class families. Affordable housing development often requires multiple public subsidies to become financially feasible. One such program, the Housing Trust Fund, will help advance the President's call by increasing production of, and access to, affordable housing in communities across the country.

The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) program provides critical funding for acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction of quality housing that is deeply targeted to be affordable to these vulnerable populations. By statute, 75 percent of HTF funds must be used for households who have incomes below the greater of the extremely low-income limit for their area or the Federal Poverty Line, with the remainder benefitting very low-income households. HTF provides soft financing (e.g., grants, zero interest loans, low interest loans, forgivable loans), large capital subsidies, and ongoing operating subsidies that enable HTF-assisted units to remain affordable for a minimum of 30 years.

Question. How will investing in the National Housing Trust Fund help create jobs, strengthen our economy, and reduce housing instability?

Answer. The American Jobs Plan will create jobs that pay prevailing wages, including through project labor agreements with a free and fair choice to join a union and bargain collectively. Through formula funding, grants, and project-based rental assistance, the plan will extend affordable rental opportunities to underserve communities nationwide, including rural and tribal areas. Since 2016 the Housing Trust Fund has financed 850 units of affordable housing and leveraged $863 million of other funds for affordable housing with a leveraging ratio of 8.81:1 (i.e., $8.81 of private or other public dollars for each HTF dollar invested in rental projects).

HUD estimates that the $692.9 million of HTF funds allocated in FY 2021 will result in approximately 5,400 assisted units for extremely low-income renter households, and approximately 12,000 jobs. Investing in the Housing Trust Funds means that these resulting jobs and affordable rental units will help stabilize local economies as well as secure housing for extremely low-income families, strengthening the communities they live in.

Question. Is there anything else you would like to add about the importance of making this investment?

Answer. Since the financial crisis of 2009, high rents in proportion to renter incomes has remained the dominant housing problem among households with worst-case needs, leaving these renters with a substantial, unmet need for affordable housing and very low-income renter households facing competition from higher-income renters for an inadequate supply of affordable rental units. The recent economic effects of the COVID–19 pandemic are not evenly distributed across the population. Households that were already experiencing housing affordability or stability issues are more likely than other households to hold jobs affected by public health and social distancing measures. The pandemic exacerbated affordability and stability issues for these households. Federal, state, and local eviction moratoria and appropriation of substantial resources for rental assistance has lessened the pandemic's impact on existing affordability and stability issues. In the intermediate and long-term, however, the nation must prioritize expansion of the quality housing stock that is available and affordable for households with worst-case housing needs.

The Housing Trust Fund, through its deep income targeting and 30-year minimum affordability requirements, is an effective vehicle for delivering that investment.

RADON TESTING AND MITIGATION

Despite a 1988 law requiring HUD to "develop an effective departmental policy for dealing with radon contamination... to ensure that occupants of [public housing] are not exposed to hazardous levels of radon," HUD still does not require radon testing in all one million-plus federally subsidized housing units nationally, and has not taken responsibility to test for radon when housing authorities cannot or do not.

Question. With whom does HUD believe the ultimate responsibility for compliance with its congressionally mandated responsibility to ensure that those living in public housing "are not exposed to hazardous levels of radon," lies?

Answer. It is a shared responsibility. At the time of the McKinney Act, national consensus standards had not yet been developed for radon testing and mitigation. HUD was part of the group that created the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST) radon consensus standards. The coordination that the McKinney Act amendment section encourages with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has only expanded since that time, including participation by HUD and eight other Federal agencies in the Federal Radon Action Plan (2011—2015). HUD is continuing this collaboration as a member of the National Radon Action Plan leadership implementation committee, a public/private partnership chaired by the American Lung Association with EPA support.

Question. If HUD believes they have delegated that entire authority to public housing authorities, what steps has HUD taken to ensure that authority is being carried out?

Answer. Under current statute and HUD regulations, the Responsible Entity (RE), the unit of general local or state government where the public housing project is located, is typically responsible for signing off on environmental reviews of public housing properties. The role of the RE is explained in PIH Notices 2013–07 and 2016–22. The screening for contamination including excessive radon levels is part of the guidance and training for HUD grantees and REs. The radon testing reports for public housing agency (PHA) properties are provided to the PHA and/or the RE and not to HUD. In addition to the screening that is part of an environmental review, via PIH Notice 2013–06, the public housing program continues to recommend and encourage PHAs test for radon and mitigate excessive radon levels based on EPA's radon action level, even when there is not an environmental review activity that requires the contamination screening.

Question. What steps will HUD take to increase that compliance?

Answer. The Department agrees that there is a need for increased awareness and guidance to HUD grantees on radon testing and mitigation. From a survey of public health guidance, the majority of the guidance on radon is aimed at the single-family homeowner audience and is related to residential real estate transactions, providing an opportunity for HUD to create practical guidance to a multifamily rental portfolio audience. HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, the Office of Public and Indian Housing, and the Office of Multifamily Housing are working together to provide guidance to PHAs and HUD-assisted multifamily owners/operators on radon basics, including summaries of testing and mitigation procedures based on the national consensus standards. This effort is expected to improve compliance based on an increase in knowledge of the importance of testing for radon and current best practices for testing and mitigation. In addition, the 2022 President's Budget requests $5 million for a radon testing and mitigation resident safety demonstration project that would set the stage for public housing agencies to mitigate elevated radon levels and provide HUD with implementation information for consideration of subsequent steps in addressing radon in public housing.

Question. Does HUD have any current plans to expand the scope of mandatory radon testing in federally subsidized housing beyond its current reach?

Answer. Excess radon risk is related to geology, soil composition, building types, and dwelling unit floor count. In 2019, HUD updated radon testing requirements for Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) conversions of public housing and certain other properties to project-based assistance. The public housing program is conducting a grant competition for public housing agencies to address housing-related health hazards. Radon testing and mitigation is an eligible and prioritized activity in this competitive grant program. Additionally, the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act included $4 million for a radon in public housing demonstration grant program, which is being designed. Information collected after these grants are carried out will help the Department determine appropriate updates to radon policies and guidance. Also, following the release of the HUD Inspector General Office's report titled, "HUD Program Offices' Policies and Approaches for Radon" (released on April 8, 2021), HUD program offices are working to address the IG's recommendations.

Question. Does HUD plan to survey the threat of radon exposure in at-risk federally subsidized housing units as reported by the Oregonian?

Answer. HUD's guidance and training for Responsible Entities (REs: the unit of general local or state government where the public housing project is located) includes instructions on how to screen public housing properties for contamination, including excessive radioactive gas levels, as part of the environmental assessment process. The Oregonian article has been helpful in increasing awareness of residential indoor radon exposure. Program staff work directly with grantees, including the PHAs reported on by the Oregonian. The issues covered are complicated and the Department will continue to be available to the Oregon delegation to address the important issue of indoor air radon exposure.

Question. Will HUD commit to mandating implementation of radon mitigation systems immediately upon discovery of a high radon test result?

Answer. HUD currently requires testing (with suitable exceptions) and mitigation of radon levels in indoor air when the EPA's radon action level (of 4 picocuries per liter) is equaled or exceeded, for a range of new and refinanced Multifamily Housing mortgages. For the public housing program, the current radon guidance strongly encourages public housing agencies to proactively plan and complete radon testing and follow-up with mitigation strategies. The screening for contamination including excessive radon levels is part of the guidance and training for HUD grantees and the Responsible Entity (RE: the unit of general local or state government where the public housing project is located). When EPA radon in air action levels of 4 pCi/L or higher are identified during an environmental review, the RE makes the determination on the appropriate implementation of radon mitigation practices and systems.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN

RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Question. Please describe HUD's proposals for resilient infrastructure included in the American Jobs Plan and FY22 budget request, including how these proposals will benefit infrastructure throughout the country-not just in states along the coasts.

Answer. Over the past decade, communities across the country have witnessed a historic number of deadly and destructive weather and climate events. In 2020 alone, the United States experienced 22 weather and climate disaster events that each exceeded $1 billion in losses ($95 billion in cumulative losses)—a new record. These disasters were not isolated to tropical storms affecting our coasts, but included floods, severe windstorms, wildfire, and drought. To address these risks, the American Jobs Plan includes $2.5 billion for HUD's Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)-Resiliency program. This program would build on prior lessons from the community-scale resilience programs that HUD has administered in the past—the National Disaster Resilience Competition, Rebuild by Design, and CDBG-Mitigation programs. Unlike other agencies, HUD has experience with improving resilience in low- and moderate-income areas. Using the CDBG program to deliver resilience will ensure targeting to low- and moderate-income areas throughout the country that have an increased risk from climate-related disasters. Participating communities would commit to using the funding to increase resilience of these at-risk areas.

Additionally, the FY22 Budget requests $800 million for targeted investments to improve the quality of housing through climate resilience and energy efficiency. As part of the Administration's whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis, HUD is committed to expanding energy-efficient and climate-resilient housing options in public and other HUD-assisted housing. Funds would be used to create a new program, the Green and Resilient Retrofit Program within Multifamily Housing, and fund initiatives that align with or are structured within existing programs: the Rental Assistance Demonstration, Public Housing, Native American Housing, and Choice Neighborhoods. As described above, the Department would target low- and moderate-income areas throughout the country.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SUSAN M. COLLINS

LARGE-SCALE ADVANCED MANUFACTURING, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Question. The University of Maine is becoming a leader in large-scale advanced manufacturing, and it is now the site of one of the largest 3D printers in the world. In fact, UMaine recently broke three Guinness World Records for the world's largest prototype polymer 3D printer, largest solid 3D-printed object, and largest 3D-printed boat. This accelerated rapid prototyping, enabled by high performance computing, can quickly advance R&D efforts in both the defense and civilian arenas. UMaine is now developing a new Factory of the Future concept which would use high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, and additive manufacturing technology to quickly build prototype structures which could ultimately lower the cost of navy vessels and civilian craft, as well as quickly produce low-cost housing units.

These are the sorts of cutting-edge, advanced manufacturing technologies and research and design efforts that will keep America competitive globally. How does the Administration's proposal support university-led R&D efforts like UMaine's?

Answer. Advanced manufacturing projects such as the University of Maine's record setting 3D-printer are not only proof of the power of the United States' educational institutions innovation, but also show that this type of R&D investment means jobs and business development potential for the communities around these university and advanced manufacturing investments. HUD will continue to support the development of new and improved technologies, methods, and materials in housing construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance that not only address climate and resilience but also meet the public safety needs to ensure a safe living environment. HUD also supports place-based investments through multiple programs such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Community Development Block Grants-Disaster Recovery (CDBG–DR) that include job training and support for small businesses that can fuel the workforce and supply chain of these groundbreaking technological investments.

HUD grantees have used CDBG–DR funds in the past to support faculty and student research and commercialization efforts. HUD also sees such projects as advancing economic resilience to the effects of climate change, especially given the emphasis placed by the CDBG and CDBG–DR programs on providing benefits (e.g., employment) to vulnerable low- and moderate-income families which are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.

HUD is also open to funding research into technologies that enable faster, cheaper, and/or more energy-efficient housing under the American Jobs Plan, specifically the *Build, preserve, and retrofit more than two million homes and commercial buildings, modernize our nation's schools and childcare facilities, and upgrade veterans' hospitals and Federal buildings* proposal. HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) has recently awarded cooperative agreements to universities to conduct state of the art research on building technologies, methods, and materials for housing construction. A few examples of current projects include:

—A cooperative agreement with Texas A&M Engineering to research 3D Printed Concrete Single-/Multi-Family Housing Technologies. The objectives of this project are to: (1) demonstrate, document, and validate a rational design procedure for 3D printed concrete residential construction, accounting for seismic loads; and (2) develop, in coordination with a stakeholder-based Peer Review Panel, a "Best Practices document" to serve as a U.S. code proposal that can be adopted by local jurisdictions and national-level provisions and design codes to ensure public safety needs are addressed.

—A project conducted by Home Innovation Research Laboratory ("Home Innovation") and a collaboration of industry partners will evaluate wall system components including windows and doors (i.e., flashing/sealing details), wall penetration methods for installing utilities (i.e., water and electrical), and wall connections between the roof and foundation. Although the research is not university-directed, Home Innovation will conduct qualitative research among home builders and contractors at the jobsite and through a national survey to understand the challenges and opportunities to accelerate the adoption of 3DCP.

—Research on Advanced Modular Housing Design (AMHD) Technologies for Post-Disaster Housing by University of Florida. This research focuses on developing hyper-efficient, advanced modular post-disaster housing that has high levels of energy efficiency, resilience, and construction flexibility (e.g., deconstructability and reassembly) and is capable of being manufactured at high production rates. The intent is for the AMHD to play a major role in creating permanent resilient, sustainable communities in the wake of disasters.

—The Terner Center at the University of California at Berkeley is leading an analysis of the energy savings potential of integrated hot water systems, given the high proportion of typical building energy usage associated with water and space heating. This research collaboration among the Terner Center, SmithGroup, and Factory OS will assess the advantages and challenges of combining integrated hot water systems with modular construction practices with the goal of optimizing for cost efficiency, quality installation, and performance of this major energy saving technique to encourage further adoption.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN HOEVEN

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Last Congress, I served as the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. As chairman, I saw firsthand the positive impact that tribal housing programs can have on tribal communities. The Native American Housing Block Grants (NAHBG) and Indian Community Development Block Grants (ICDBG) are both resources that assist tribal communities with access to safe and affordable housing.

Question. How can we ensure that tribal communities will continue to have support that will enable them to adequately address the challenges they face locally?

Answer. Tribal communities have done an excellent job of utilizing resources to serve their communities. The additional resources provided in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, American Rescue Plan, and other appropriations during the pandemic have been essential in maintaining operations while helping to address the impact of the pandemic and the severe housing needs. The Administration recognizes the need for continued sustained investments in housing and infrastructure in Tribal communities for the long term.

The 2022 President's Budget requests $1 billion for Native American Programs, which is $175 million more than the 2021 enacted level. In addition, the American Jobs Plan provides a $2 billion investment in Tribal communities to expand the supply of affordable housing, create supportive infrastructure needs, allow Tribes to advance green building standards and address the consequences of climate change on their communities. These funds would be administered through tested programs like the Indian Housing Block Grant and Indian Community Development Block Grant, ensuring that these resources would reach communities effectively and efficiently in line with our government-to-government relationship.

In addition to ensuring that critical resources are made available to Tribal communities, HUD is committed to working closely with our Tribal partners to understand the evolving challenges they face locally. For example, HUD meets on a weekly basis with Tribal leaders and housing practitioners, where HUD learns about major issues and challenges facing Tribal housing practitioners and can demonstrate that HUD operates in a transparent manner. HUD is also committed to working closely with Congress to ensure that all members are briefed and updated on major Tribal housing issues, and to provide any assistance that may be requested in developing and drafting effective legislation aimed at improving the lives of Native American families.

Question. How do you plan to address affordable housing concerns for tribal communities?

Answer. HUD has worked closely—and will continue to work closely—with our Tribal partners to strengthen our government-to-government relationship and strengthen our consultation policies and practices. In addition, HUD works with Tribal and other governments, Federal agencies, community organizations, and the private sector to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response to Indian Country's housing and community development needs.

HUD actively works to ensure that our Tribal partners are aware of all available funding, such as the annual appropriation for the Indian Housing Block Grant program and supplemental funding provided in the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan. In addition, Low Income Housing Credits support the construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing in Tribal areas. Other collaborative activities include:

—Hosting webinars;
—Hosting weekly meetings with our Tribal partners;
—Issuing guidance and waivers; and
—Sending letters about training opportunities, technical assistance, and reporting requirements.

Since 2020, HUD has received a significant increase in funding to address affordable housing needs in Indian Country. In total, $1.050 billion in new funding ($300 million in the CARES Act and $750 million in the American Rescue Plan) has been appropriated to the Office of Native American Programs, which administers to largest national housing programs in Indian County. These resources will have a major impact in Tribal communities and will help address some of the unmet housing needs experienced in these communities. However, the overall need for affordable housing and critical infrastructure is staggering and will continue to require additional resources into the future. Through the 2022 Budget request and additional funding requested in the American Jobs Plan, the Administration aims to further address urgent infrastructure and housing needs while providing significant job opportunities for Tribal communities and families.

Furthermore, the Administration's proposals to expand allocations of Low-Income Housing Credits and to introduce Neighborhood Homes Investment Credits would generally encourage the development and rehabilitation of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing, including in Tribal communities.

CONCLUSION OF HEARING

Chairman LEAHY. I will come down there to personally thank you, but on the record, I want to thank the witnesses. I know this has gone long, but I hope you can tell by the questions there is a great deal of interest in this.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:25 p.m., Tuesday, April 20, the hearing was concluded, and the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

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