

prioritize cooperation with allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific. The initiative will increase security assistance for our regional allies and partners, and invest in interoperability. In the future, we expect the initiative will provide resources to support new mechanisms for deepening regional defense cooperation, including multinational fusion centers and joint training and experimentation.

Fourth, and finally, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will help preserve peace in the Indo-Pacific by bolstering credible deterrence. The initiative will focus resources on efforts to deny our adversaries the possibility of a quick, easy, or cheap victory. By injecting uncertainty and risk into the calculations of our adversaries, we can discourage them from choosing the path of aggression.

The Pacific Deterrence Initiative is by no means a cure-all. After all, achieving credible deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region is not America's task alone. It can only be realized through a collective effort with our allies and partners such as Australia. Moreover, the challenges we face today are not limited to, or even primarily, military in character. As ARIA emphasized, we must also step up our diplomatic and economic security efforts while remaining true to our values. Nonetheless, we hope the Pacific Deterrence Initiative will serve as another demonstration to our mates in Australia, as well as our other allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, that America's commitment to the region remains bipartisan and enduring.

Mr. GARDNER. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their bipartisan work on the Defense bill. We had a number of bipartisan amendments included and provisions that improve the use of secure facility space and make sure military communities have access to clean and safe drinking water—an incredibly important issue facing Colorado, Colorado Springs, the Fort Carson area, and others as they address the PFAS issues this Nation has dealt with.

I think it is important to remember that when one member of the family serves our country in uniform, the entire family serves, and this legislation supports military families in Colorado and truly all over the world. It provides a much needed pay increase for our military members and continues to support military spouses seeking employment.

The NDAA addresses the challenges servicemembers and their families face living in privatized housing. It expands resources to continue to address PFAS water contamination in our military communities.

In Colorado, we are proud to play a very key role in defending the United States. Our military installations are critical to national security and supporting operations in space. This year's defense authorization includes language to ensure there is transparency when it comes to selecting the final home for the headquarters—the permanent basing decision of U.S. Space Command—and that Space Command's critical mission drives the decision-making process. That is what we ensured through the Defense Authorization Act.

The bill also supports the ongoing standup of our Nation's newest mili-

tary branch, the U.S. Space Force, to include my legislation establishing the Space Force Reserve. The Space Force Reserve will mirror its sister military service branches, and as a result, the Space Force will better organize the military to handle Space Force's operations and bring all military members working in the space domain under the same organizational umbrella.

General Raymond is working hard to make sure the U.S. Space Force is agile and prepared to respond to national security threats in the space domain.

As we continue to work in establishing the U.S. Space Force, Colorado is proud to continue its support of our Nation's military operations in space. That is why in the coming weeks I will be working with my colleagues in the Senate to establish the U.S. Space Force Caucus, led by bipartisan co-leads and chairs. The caucus will provide my colleagues and their staff the opportunity to learn more about military space operations and the critical threats we face in the space domain. I welcome my colleagues' support and participation in the establishment of this caucus.

Again, I thank my colleagues, Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED, for their work on this important bill, and I am proud to support legislation that authorizes \$268 million for military construction projects in Colorado and provides a 3-percent pay raise for the men and women serving our Nation in uniform.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). The Senator from West Virginia.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, the world we are living in today is a very different one than we envisioned when we rang in the new year in the beginning of 2020 or even when we celebrated St. Patrick's Day in March. COVID has altered almost every aspect of our lives, from where we gather to celebrate or mourn to how our children are educated.

Far too many across the country have lost loved ones to this disease, or they are living with health complications because of it. However, while we are rightly focusing much of our energy on the coronavirus, this is not the only health crisis we are battling.

Unfortunately, across the Nation, drug overdose deaths are rising amidst the coronavirus, negating much of the progress we have made over the last several years. A White House Office of National Drug Control Policy analysis shows an 11.4-percent increase in fatalities for the first 4 months of 2020. My home State of West Virginia reported 923 overdose-related EMS calls in May, which is roughly a 50-percent jump from May of 2019. Our neighboring State of Kentucky—and I am sure the neighboring State of Ohio too—has estimated a 25-percent increase in overdose deaths between January and March.

Is COVID-19 directly causing these overdose deaths? No. Is the pandemic exacerbating our Nation's addiction struggle? Absolutely. It is not hard to see why. The past several months have been difficult for all of us; however, for someone in recovery, this disruption may cause them to have a hard time keeping their treatment regimens in place. The need for social distancing makes in-person recovery programs that are a lifeline for some almost impossible. Social distancing may also lead to more individuals using drugs alone, raising the risk of overdose deaths because there is no one there to help or intervene.

Last week, I had a chance to talk with CDC Director Redfield about where we are in our Nation's battle against addiction. The preliminary CDC data recently released showed drug overdose deaths climbed to a record high last year and how the addiction crisis continues to shift also, with overdose deaths rising in our other States, such as Alaska and the Dakotas. He also pointed out that deaths involving methamphetamine and cocaine have been steadily increasing despite the fact that deaths caused largely by synthetic opioids have been decreasing—or actually pills, have been decreasing. We talked about how issues like neonatal abstinence syndrome, where babies are born exposed to opioids, continue to spread.

We talked about the work we have done here in Congress and what we continue to need to do. Over the years, as I mentioned, we have seen a decline in the deaths from prescription opioids. We have seen increases in access to treatment resources. Moreover, we have seen a recognition that, as a country, we have a real addiction crisis. However, these recent statistics and the evidence we are seeing related to substance abuse during our current pandemic show us there is so much more work to do, and it has a sense of urgency to it for many of us.

This sentiment was also shared when I met with Director Carroll of the ONDCP. We met in Huntington just last Friday. Huntington is a town that is particularly hard hit by addiction. Director Carroll expressed his concern over the rising numbers of overdose deaths. He acknowledged that the public health threat posed by COVID-19 and the essential mitigation measures implemented across the country to slow the spread together have created unprecedented obstacles for Americans seeking drug treatment.

We discussed some of the responses the Trump administration has taken to the pandemic and our new reality. The Trump administration has relaxed some of the rules related to the prescribing of medication-assisted treatment. That has been helpful. The increased role of telehealth in behavioral and mental health care—that has been helpful.

The Director updated me on ONDCP's work in working to address the specific

impact drug addiction is having on rural America. Just last month, ONDCP and other Federal agencies launched the Rural Community Toolbox, which is an online clearinghouse created with the express purpose of connecting rural leaders with funding, data, and information on how to combat drug addiction. We know resources in rural America are not as plentiful as they are in other areas of the country.

We also discussed the administration's effort at the southern border to keep illegal drugs out of our communities. I am particularly interested in this area, as I chair the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, a subcommittee of Appropriations. Through this role, I was able to focus on the needs on the interdiction side so that drugs do not even physically get to West Virginia in the first place. I have been to our southern border, which is actually where most of the drugs are coming from that end up in my State. I have worked with Customs and Border Protection, the TSA, the Secret Service, and the Coast Guard to make sure they remain focused on this incredibly important aspect of our national problem.

I am also extremely proud of the work that the HSI division has done on homeland security. They have increased their presence in West Virginia and the number of officers, equipment, and partnerships, such as with Marshall University, to help supplement the work of our local law enforcement. HSI has expanded their presence at international mail facilities—something I have been a strong proponent of, and many of us in this body have as well.

Earlier this month, the Department of Homeland Security issued a 2019 seizures report to Congress. This report confirms that a majority of drugs continue to come in from our southwest border, including cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine.

Challenges as a nation and individually fill our reality today. How I wish the drug addiction epidemic did not have to continue to be one of them. Sadly, as many families across our Nation know all too well, it continues to ruin many lives. Wishing it away is not going to work. We must continue to keep our eye on the ball and provide the resources necessary to resume the progress we have begun to see.

My colleagues and I on both sides of the aisle have worked with the Senate Appropriations Committee to commit much needed resources. Chairman BLUNT has shown his dedication to the cause, both through the regular appropriations and through our stimulus bills. We continue to work to ensure that behavioral and mental health providers have the resources they need to continue to treat patients and keep their offices open. I am working with bipartisan colleagues on creative ways to address this crisis, whether by ensuring that doctors can offer non-

opioid choices as they resume elective surgeries through my NOPAIN Act with Senator JONES, or by ensuring that those in treatment and recovery can use the technologies of today to connect virtually to peers and counselors through the Prescription Digital Therapeutics to Support Recovery Act that I introduced with Senator SHAHEEN, or by arming families with the information and resources they need to help their loved ones stay in recovery during these trying times through the Family Support Services for Addiction Act that I have worked on with Senator GILLIBRAND.

Fortunately, we continue to not be alone in this fight. Despite the other demands they are currently facing, community and local organizations continue to rise to the challenge. Just last week, Shatterproof, which is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis in America, launched the Addiction Treatment Locator, Assessment, and Standards Platform, also known as ATLAS. ATLAS is the first resource of its kind to help those seeking addiction treatments find high-quality care and appropriate care. It was launched in six States. I am happy to say West Virginia was one of them, with the hope of expanding it to many more.

Our Nation is facing unprecedented challenges; however, I remain confident that we can meet all of them, including resuming the progress we had begun to make on our Nation's addiction crisis. I am dedicated to this, passionate about it, and look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on creative solutions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I thank Senator CAPITO for not letting this body and this country forget about this terrible addiction crisis that has afflicted her State, my State, and particularly our region of the country, but well beyond that, her work has been particularly important, and I thank her for doing that.

I think it also points to the importance of our doing, during this pandemic, other things to support local governments that are so stretched with Medicaid dollars and with local public health dollars. That is the importance of the next round of pandemic funding—State and local governments, local communities, and local education.

We know that Senator MCCONNELL's effort—and I put the word "effort" in quotation marks—has fallen so short. He waited and waited and waited and waited and waited. The House passed its bill in May. This body, through Senator MCCONNELL, would not even take it up until—would not even begin negotiations, really, until this week, when unemployment is about to expire and when the eviction moratorium is about to expire. If the opioid crisis, public health crisis, is bad now and we haven't dealt with the coronavirus,

well, now imagine what will happen when people lose their unemployment or when it is reduced to \$200 a week, causing mass eviction. Moratoria are expiring, and eviction courts are opening up all over the country. Imagine what will happen with the opioid addiction public health disaster and imagine what will happen with coronavirus if people lose their apartments in large numbers.

I just don't think any of us can quite imagine that tragedy. It is clear that my colleagues on this side of the aisle don't get out very much, don't talk to people very much, and don't listen to people very much and see what these huge needs are for people to continue some semblance of the standard of living they had prior to the coronavirus.

NOMINATION OF DANA T. WADE

Madam President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Dana Wade to serve as the Federal Housing Commissioner and Assistant Secretary for Housing.

Mrs. Wade has a long record of public service—I credit her for that—both in the Senate and this administration. She worked at HUD and as staff to the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. However, the policies that Mrs. Wade has supported during her work in the Trump administration led me to believe she is not the right person to lead HUD's housing and home ownership programs at this critical time.

Just last year, Mrs. Wade held a senior political role at the Office of Management and Budget. During her tenure at OMB, Mrs. Wade signed off on budget proposals that would have slashed HUD's funding by billions, eliminated CDBG and HOME programs—programs critical to affordable housing and community development—and raised rents on the lowest income renters. She also signed off on rules that could displace more than 55,000 children from their homes. I don't think that is the person we want during the pandemic, when all the moratoria on evictions expire, when the majority party wants to cut \$400 a week from unemployed workers—these are unemployed workers—and when eviction courts are open. I just question whether Mrs. Wade, even in this administration, is the right person to temper some of their actions that might end up with more people denied housing.

She signed off on a rule that denied transgender individuals experiencing homelessness the right to seek shelter according to their gender identity. She signed off on a rule that cut HUD's affirmatively furthering fair housing regulation—an important civil rights protection required by the Fair Housing Act, an act written and pushed and initially implemented by the father of the Senator from Utah. I know he is really proud of his dad, and I know he is really proud of HUD's fair housing laws of the late 1960s.

On Mrs. Wade's watch, HUD and OMB proposed to allow communities to ignore and exacerbate segregation even