

of last year. They said: Well, first, we are going to wait and see how the State decides to spend their \$4 billion because we don't want to spend on something and have the State spend on the same thing. So we are going to let the State, the Governor, Governor Northam, the General Assembly program the \$4 billion. But while the State is doing that, we are going to go out and dialogue with our citizens.

And I really applaud my local governments. Recognizing this was one-time money that wouldn't happen every year, they had intense public dialogue with local constituents about what can we do to really transform? How can we use this money? And they have done it in fascinating ways.

As I traveled around the State and talked to these local governments, I see them advancing long-delayed capital projects, water and wastewater upgrades, closing the digital divide by investing in broadband, constructing community centers in parts of the community that haven't received investments in the past.

Many gave hazard pay to first responders. The American Rescue Plan helped people fund police, ambulance, fire, mental health workers, public health workers, grants to local nonprofits and churches that supported the community during COVID, grants to shore up Virginia's hard-hit businesses that were engaged in the tourism industry as people stopped traveling. This is what our local governments have done with these dollars.

The investments are supplemented by more than three and a half billion additional dollars to Virginia childcare providers, K-12 school systems, colleges, community colleges, with billions more for other local priorities like transit and broadband infrastructure.

So it was heartening to talk to these county officials. And there are more red counties in Virginia than there are blue counties, so I was talking to county officials from all over the State, and more would have been in Republican counties than Democratic counties. But they were thrilled that Congress—that the Senate by a one-vote margin, as we all remember—passed the American Rescue Plan to invest in these key local priorities.

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

Mr. President, on the bipartisan infrastructure bill, I told them: I am going to leave this floor and race to Washington and hope that there aren't any State troopers nearby because I need to get to Washington to go to the signing at the White House of the infrastructure bill.

This is the Nation's biggest commitment to infrastructure since the Interstate Highway System initiative in the Eisenhower administration. It will employ hundreds of thousands of people and raise the platform for economic success for decades.

The Presiding Officer was in local government just like I was, and if you

are in local government, you care about infrastructure. When I was a mayor, I had a transit system, I had roads, I had bike trails, I had an airport, I had an Amtrak station, and I had a port on the James River, which is connected to the Chesapeake Bay. There is a lot of oceangoing and freight going out of our port. I had all of that. If you are in local government, you care about infrastructure. That is why it was exciting to see so many mayors and local officials at the White House yesterday when the bill was being signed.

I was proud to cheer on my colleagues who worked on that bill, and I thank all of them. I am especially proud that a provision that I had with Senator WICKER, of Mississippi—to enable our historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions to be involved in training the workforce and creating the innovations that we will need to make this infrastructure investment—was included in the bill.

I want to give a special thanks to my Virginia colleague, MARK WARNER, who, I think, was sort of an unsung hero in the negotiations around the infrastructure bill.

The impact of the bill is going to be felt in Virginia for generations: billions for roads and bridges, ports and dredging, airports, rail to trails, railroad, climate resiliency, broadband, energy grid modernization, waste and wastewater infrastructure. The infrastructure bill contains a significant investment for Chesapeake Bay clean-up—that really matters to us—and a significant investment in the Appalachian Regional Commission. That really matters to southern and western Virginia, the parts of our State that are in Appalachia.

Allocating these dollars to States in smart ways will allow them to prioritize the use of the funds in our cities, counties, and towns in a way that will ensure that each State gets to tackle the most important priorities, because the Virginia solution wouldn't be the California solution or the New Hampshire solution. Every State can use these funds to fund the projects that are the most important there. Virginia is going to receive a minimum of \$100 million for affordable broadband, at least \$7.6 billion for roads and bridges, and at least \$2.7 billion for transit, among other sizable investments.

As I explained this to my Virginia Association of Counties yesterday morning, they were overjoyed because they all had—and the Presiding Officer remembers this—their local capital improvement projects lists, with projects that had been bumping along for years, and there were never enough dollars to really advance them. Now the dollars will be there to get the projects done and cross them off the lists.

BUILD BACK BETTER AGENDA

Mr. President, I want to now talk about the third bill. The administra-

tion calls this bill the Build Back Better bill, and some call it the reconciliation bill because of the Senate budget procedure that we are using to pass it. As a member of the Budget and the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees, I call it the education and workforce bill. This bill, to me, is fundamentally about preparing America's workers for tomorrow and making sure that our workforce has the training and the childcare and the housing and the healthcare to outcompete any country in the world.

If we want to make good on the promise of the infrastructure bill, who is going to build it? We just signed an infrastructure bill, but it didn't have the training and the education component. Who is going to build this? We have to have a workforce to build this massive infrastructure improvement, a once-in-a-generation improvement. That is what the Build Back Better bill is about.

We are not going to outcompete China just by diplomacy or tariffs or tough talk. We aren't going to outcompete China just by growing our military budget. The best way to outcompete China is to invest in America's workers.

The success of America's economy in the next 50 years will depend on our making the same investments that allowed us to thrive in the 20th century—investing in infrastructure, investing in people—and that is the basis of Build Back Better.

This education and workforce bill also provides sizable investments in community colleges to train workers for infrastructure jobs, to train the next generation of K-12 teachers, and to train workers to enable America to lead the world into a new and innovative energy economy. There will be investments in rural economic development, a Pell grant increase, an extension of the child tax credit, and additional healthcare and housing funds to reduce costs for American families. The bill will close the Medicaid coverage gap, lower healthcare costs and the costs of prescription drugs, and will fund better public health infrastructure.

The thing about this bill that maybe excites me the most is this: We will be able to provide funding for States to make prekindergarten universally available for every 3- and 4-year-old in this country, and we will do it through a mixed delivery model that supports high-quality public and private providers. This will help an additional 140,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Virginia have pre-K, and we will also fund childcare for the kids younger than 3 years old to bring down costs of childcare for working families. When you combine both the pre-K and the childcare support in Virginia, it will mean that 500,000 more kids just in my State will have access to quality and affordable childcare and early education. When kids get a strong start, it

puts them on a brighter path for the rest of their lives, and it makes it much easier for their parents to go into the workforce, knowing that their child has high-quality and affordable childcare options.

If we pass this bill, and I am confident we will, it is going to be the most pro-family and most pro-child bill Congress has ever passed. I believe this bill will do for children what Social Security did for seniors in a status that we have long lived in this country, where we accept a child poverty rate that is dramatically higher than the adult poverty rate. What does that say? What does that say about a society? This workforce and education bill, Build Back Better, will end our acceptance of that unacceptable status quo and move us to a position where we can cut child poverty and give our kids a much stronger start for a successful life.

The American Rescue Plan, as I mentioned a minute ago, passed the Senate by just one vote—just one vote. One vote had changed all of those benefits to my local governments and to families and to educational institutions and to hospitals and healthcare networks and to businesses. All of those would have not occurred. None of the counties whose leadership I spoke to yesterday would have received the moneys that I talked about for the transformative projects.

I hope we will pass this education and workforce bill by a wider margin than just one vote, but if it is just one vote—if it is just one vote—so be it. So be it.

When there was an effort in this Chamber in August of 2017 to take health insurance away from 30 million people—one of the most dramatic moments in my entire public service career—we saved 30 million people's healthcare by 1 vote—by 1 vote. When we acted on the American Rescue Plan in the middle of the pandemic, in March, to try to help our country climb out of the worst public health crisis in a century, we got it by one vote. I would like a wider margin, but if it is just one vote—if it is just one vote—we will still be doing really important work.

Americans deserve a Congress that will fund businesses and schools; that will train the workforce; that will build out transportation networks; that will support hospitals and health clinics; deploy vaccines; provide additional funding for law enforcement officers and first responders; create better broadband connections; provide tax relief to working families and lower childcare costs. Build Back Better is the next step to lifting us out of the pandemic and rebuilding the American economy.

I have to say I am 63 years old—I will be 64 in February—and this has been the hardest 20 months of my life, and I think most people in this country might say the same thing. Just think about the sheer number of the 750,000

people who have passed and the people who have been ill—my wife and I both had COVID, and we know a lot of people who died of COVID—and beyond, those being the folks who didn't have COVID but who had a grandchild born whom they couldn't go visit or a friend who died, and they couldn't go to the funeral, or who lost a job or had a business that they had sweated to build but had to shut its doors. It has been such a tough time.

But, as I looked out at the hundreds of county officials who were gathered in person yesterday in Norfolk and as I talked to them about these bills—and I saw them there in person—I detected an uplift. I am feeling a sense of uplift. I am feeling a sense of uplift as we see wages increasing. I am feeling a sense of uplift as we make a commitment, for the first time in a generation, to be builders and invest and grow our infrastructure. I am feeling a sense of uplift as we approach investing in workers and in our families the same way we are investing in infrastructure.

I have a feeling that, over the next couple of months, these important investments will braid together in a way that will make people feel a sense of uplift about the economy and as vaccines continue to be distributed and now as boosters are being distributed.

How wonderful it was to hear the Presiding Officer talking about his children being able to be vaccinated, his school-aged children. I think that is going to contribute to a sense of uplift, too.

I just want this body to be a generator of uplift. Sadly, a lot has come out of the Capitol in the last few years that hasn't exactly been an uplift for people. I believe we are standing on the threshold of a chapter where this body, the U.S. Senate, will be a great generator of uplift for the American people, and I believe passing the Build Back Better is a step that will be really important in making that happen.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I want to address the Senate on an issue that is very close to my heart.

Now that we are well into the month of November and our Nation's observance of the National Family Caregivers Month, I would like to recognize the family caregivers across this Nation and the difficult and vitally important work that they do.

I have a brother and a sister. Both of our parents passed away in the middle—well, 2014 and 2015, but they both suffered from Alzheimer's at the same time. It was very, very difficult on all of us to figure out the best way to ease their pain and to satisfy—it was a very difficult time—how we, as a family, were going to be providing for their care.

This experience motivated me to join my colleague Senator MICHAEL BENNET of Colorado as a cosponsor of the bipar-

tisan Assisting Caregivers Today—or ACT—Caucus.

The ACT Caucus seeks to bring much-needed attention to all of the caregivers and the issues that their caregivers face from all backgrounds. It seeks to find bipartisan ways to lessen the emotional and financial toll for those individuals who are caring for family members. And this help is needed by so, so many.

Eighty-three percent of the help provided to older adults in the United States comes from family members, friends, or even unpaid caregivers. Nearly half of all caregivers who provide help to older adults do so—like we do—for someone living with Alzheimer's or with another type of dementia.

In my home State of West Virginia, we have about 85,000 family caregivers who are living with someone who has Alzheimer's and caring for them. As we know, those of us who have been down this road, there are no easy solutions here. Not only is it emotionally taxing on a family—there is no simple path—it also can be very, very expensive.

My West Virginia Alzheimer's advocates always share with me their incredible stories—they actually let me come to one of their support groups, which I needed at the time—and also the challenges that they have as caregivers. One of these challenges is navigating the current complex medical system needed to care for someone living with Alzheimer's or, more often than not, other chronic medical conditions.

This is one of the reasons I joined with my colleague Senator DEBBIE STABENOW of Michigan—we have done a couple of things together—in introducing the Comprehensive Care for Alzheimer's Act.

This bill would address the challenge by asking the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid for some innovation to be able to test dementia care management models. It enables individuals to more seamlessly and successfully navigate healthcare and social support systems and to obtain more timely access to care.

The model is designed to reach as many Medicare beneficiaries as possible, especially individuals from rural and medically underserved areas. It provides comprehensive care services, including caregiver education and support; ensures patients have access to providers with dementia care experience; and also to reimburse providers through payment based on performance.

This is something that could have helped my brother, sister, and I as we were navigating this difficult path, by helping us to coordinate the care that our parents not just received but what they deserved. It also could have helped them by ensuring that they were receiving the best care at all times.

We must recognize the importance that our family caregivers play not