

we passed in the 2018 farm bill and in the 2024 EXPLORE Act.

When we wrote the SHRED Act, a bill designed to keep ski area fees local, Scott made clear why the legislation mattered, pointing to the daily challenges of managing a forest that supports more than a dozen ski areas and sees tens of millions of visitors each year.

Throughout his career, Scott was a thoughtful partner and a trusted presence to a wide range of stakeholders, including ranchers, local governments, ski areas, conservation organizations, recreation advocates, and many others. He listened and brought them into the process. His collaborative approach made better outcomes possible across the forest.

Even in retirement, Scott has continued to advocate for the Forest Service and for Colorado's public lands. He has made sure the national conversation about conservation includes the people who manage these lands every day. At a time of historic staffing and budget shortfalls, Scott has been a clear and credible voice for the Agency he served for more than three decades.

We are grateful for Scott's years of service and leadership. His work leaves a lasting legacy for our State, and I wish him well in whatever comes next.

#### TRIBUTE TO ERIN MINKS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize and honor the remarkable public service of Erin Minks, my senior advisor for rural affairs and regional director for the San Luis Valley. Erin dedicated two decades to Federal service—most of it in Congress—where she has been a tireless advocate for the San Luis Valley.

Erin's Congressional career began in the offices of Senator Ken Salazar, Congressman John Salazar, and Senator Mark Udall. Her public service continued with the U.S. Forest Service, where she helped craft a forest plan for the Rio Grande National Forest that will guide land management for decades to come. For the past 7 years, I have had the great privilege of working alongside Erin in my office, where she brought extraordinary knowledge, dedication, and compassion to her work.

There is hardly a person in the San Luis Valley who doesn't know Erin. Whether it is a veteran trying to access benefits, a water district applying for a grant, or a local official working on a new idea, Erin is the one they call. She picks up the phone. She shows up. And she gets results.

Erin played a central role in delivering real progress for the Valley and rural communities across our State. She led the successful reauthorization of Colorado's three National Heritage Areas—South Park, Cache la Poudre River, and Sangre de Cristo—helping preserve Colorado's history and culture. She developed major pieces of legislation, including the Groundwater

Conservation Easement Act—based on local requests to conserve the Rio Grande Basin's aquifer—and the RESILIENT Act to cut redtape for rural communities.

Thanks to her advocacy, we have secured millions of dollars in critical Federal funding for community driven projects in the San Luis Valley. Whether through the congressionally directed spending process, grants, or other Federal funding opportunities, Erin knew how to navigate the intricacies of government to get her communities the resources they needed. She has been a relentless champion for the Rio Grande Basin, Rocky Flats workers, Adams State University, Colorado's potato farmers, and the communities that define the valley's identity.

Beyond the policy wins, Erin exemplified what it means to be a public servant. She showed younger staff how to lead with empathy, build lasting relationships, and fight for the people they serve. Her work helped ensure rural voices are heard in Washington, and her presence has left a lasting mark on our State.

As Erin moves on to her next chapter, I want to express my deepest gratitude and thank her family for sharing her with all of us these many years.

Erin, we will miss you. Thank you for your extraordinary service. We wish you the very best in whatever comes next.

#### TRIBUTE TO JOHN WHITNEY

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary career and well-earned retirement of John Whitney, my senior adviser for Public Lands and Tribal Affairs and regional director for the Western Slope.

John spent two decades serving in the U.S. Congress, including the last 14 years in my office and previously in the office of Congressman John Salazar. Throughout his career, John has been one of the most effective advocates for rural communities and conservation efforts in Colorado and the American West.

There is no corner of the Western Slope that John doesn't know—and very few people west of the Continental Divide who don't know John. He built deep, lasting relationships with local elected leaders, State and Federal agencies, Tribal governments, and community members—regardless of party or background.

John never hesitated to jump in with both feet. Whether advancing landmark legislation or organizing a community meeting in a remote town, he always brought his full self to the work. He organized countless trips for me across our State, from camping on Kebler Pass, to rafting the Dolores River, to hiking the high country of the San Juans.

Over the years, John helped shape and deliver some of the most consequential conservation accomplishments in Colorado's recent history. He

played a central role in establishing three National Monuments in Colorado: Chimney Rock, Brown's Canyon, and Camp Hale-Continental Divide. He led our work to pass the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act and secure a 20-year mineral withdrawal to protect the Thompson Divide. John also helped establish the Camp Amache National Historic Site and expand Rocky Mountain National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, and Yucca House National Monument.

John was also instrumental in developing the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act, the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act, and the Dolores National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act. Additionally, he led efforts to help Western Slope communities through the SHRED Act, the Flexible Partnerships Act, the Gold King Mine Compensation Act, and efforts to expand Tribal access to clean water.

But John's legacy is not just the legislation he shaped, it is the coalitions he built and the way he encouraged people across the State to find common ground. His work is a model for what is possible when democracy works as it should, when people listen to one another, stay at the table, and pursue progress without sacrificing principle.

John has also been a mentor, a counselor, and a constant source of good humor to our staff. He helped train a new generation of Western Slope leaders and public lands advocates. His influence will echo through their work, through our office, and throughout the State for years to come. I also want to thank John's family; his achievements would not have been possible without their support, generosity, and sacrifice.

As John sets off toward new horizons, he leaves behind a legacy that will stand the test of time. Colorado's lands, communities, and civic institutions are stronger because of his service. On behalf of a grateful State and an appreciative team: Thank you, John. You will be deeply missed—and we can't wait to see where your journey takes you next.

#### REMEMBERING JUNIOR BRIDGEMAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on March 11, 2025, Kentucky lost a distinguished athlete, businessman, and mentor to many. Ulysses Lee Bridgeman, known to most as "Junior," wrote history on the basketball court, throughout Kentucky and beyond. His dedication for championing others' successes and imprinting a substantial difference on our community will not be forgotten. I ask my colleagues to please join me in honoring the life of Junior Bridgeman.

Junior was a renowned athlete who helped lead the University of Louisville men's basketball team to their third Final Four during his senior year in 1975. He then was selected eighth in the

NBA Draft by the Los Angeles Lakers, then quickly traded to the Milwaukee Bucks, where he spent 10 out of his 12 seasons playing professional basketball. He played 711 games and scored 9,892 points, where he holds the record for third most games played and the ninth most points in franchise history. In addition to his historic playing career, he was a mentor to many rookies, teaching them how to manage and navigate their newfound salaries as professional athletes.

During his time in Milwaukee, he began investing in fast food companies. As he left the league, his business ventures dramatically grew and so did his philanthropic efforts. He focused his service on youth education and community development. He was a key driver in opening Louisville's West End School, a tuition-free boarding school that instills academic rigor, character development, and responsible action in students. At the heart of Junior's legacy rests a profound desire to empower others to great success.

Junior made meaningful contributions to Louisville throughout his career, including during his time serving on the board of trustees for the University of Louisville and Simmons College of Kentucky. He served on many local boards such as PGA of America, Churchill Downs, Inc., Fifth Third Bank, Jackson Hewitt, Governors Scholar Program, Crusade for Children Foundation, Louisville Arena Authority, and others. His passion for Louisville spread throughout the Nation as he would host one of the most notable charity fundraising galas the night before the Kentucky Derby. These events brought together many celebrities and public figures, widening the audience of the event. In each of these endeavors, Junior was committed to opening doors and fostering growth for those that would otherwise not have the opportunity.

Although Junior was known for his athletic career and vast business ventures, his dedication to his faith is what set him apart. He was an active member of the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, and his service to the Lord can be seen in each of his good works. Through his commitment to serving those in need, his eagerness to give graciously, and his immense sense of humility, we remember him as a trailblazer of benefaction and progress in the Commonwealth. I would like to express my personal condolences to Junior's wife Doris, his three children, and all those who knew and loved him. The impact and legacy Junior Bridgeman leaves behind is a testament to the instrumental role we can all play in each other's lives and our communities.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### RECOGNIZING POWERTECH

• Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, as chair of the Senate Committee on Small

Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, it is my privilege to recognize PowerTech of Council Bluffs, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

In April 2016, longtime friends Josh Kallsen and Cody Forristall combined their interests in entrepreneurship to purchase PowerTech, a southwest Iowa-based electrical services company located only miles away from where the two grew up together. Although the business primarily operates out of Council Bluffs, the PowerTech team provides high-quality commercial, industrial, and residential electrical services throughout the Midwest. PowerTech works with residential clients across Iowa and its neighboring communities to design electrical remodels and repairs, install generators, provide emergency services, and fulfill everyday electrical needs. PowerTech also provides similar services for their commercial and industrial partners, in addition to around-the-clock facility maintenance.

Since the duo purchased the company, Cody supports the venture as a co-owner, while Josh handles the day-to-day operations, business development, and overall strategy. Under Josh's leadership, the PowerTech brand grew from an initial team of about 50 employees into a thriving 90-person operation. In lieu of a traditional storefront, the group operates the venture out of several state-of-the-art warehouses, including a flagship 8,000-square-foot warehouse in southwest Iowa. As PowerTech continues to build strong relationships and a reputation of high-quality service, the company solidified its role as a leader in the Council Bluffs community.

Cody and Josh took their enthusiasm for community service to a new level when they created their very own in-house philanthropy arm of PowerTech. In 2020, they launched the Power to Give Program, which organizes employees to volunteer their time and contribute to southwest Iowa charities, especially organizations involved with children and mental health. In a separate initiative, the PowerTech Cares Program provides free electrical services to a family in need each month. Beyond these programs, Josh serves on the board of the Council Bluffs Schools Foundation, Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, Council Bluffs Industrial Foundation, and the local chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association. Recently, in recognition of all their hard work and service, PowerTech won the 2024 Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce award for Business of the Year.

I want to congratulate Josh Kallsen and Cody Forristall for their entrepreneurial spirit, impressive growth, and philanthropic mindset that they pour into PowerTech and their Iowa community. I look forward to seeing their continued growth and success.●

#### REMEMBERING ROGER BARTA

• Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Roger Barta, a legendary Kansas high school educator and football coach who devoted his career to guiding and mentoring young Kansans, both in the classroom and on the gridiron.

For over 30 years, Coach Barta served as a math teacher and head football coach for the Smith Center High School Redmen. Throughout his tenure, he inspired countless student-athletes to pursue excellence in all aspects of life. His legacy is a testament to not only his character but also his extraordinary ability to inspire others.

Before Smith Center, Coach Barta coached at Atwood, Tonganoxie, and WaKeeney. No matter the school, his approach was the same: focus on fundamentals, play as a team, and treat others with respect. His teams were disciplined and hard working, traits that reflect their coach.

During his time leading the Redmen, he built one of the most successful football programs in Kansas State history—winning eight State championships, including five straight from 2004 to 2008, and leading the team to a 79-game win streak. He retired in 2012 with a career record of 323 wins and 68 losses.

However, Coach Barta's impact extended far beyond athletic achievements. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and an inspiration to many. Coach Barta believed that mutual respect and love for one another were the keys to victory, a philosophy that continues to influence generations of high school athletes and the Smith Center, KS, community.

Coach Barta retired from coaching in 2012 and was inducted into the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame 2 years later. He is remembered not only as a remarkable coach, but also as an exceptional man. May his legacy serve as a lasting example of how success is built on character, consistency, and compassion.

I now ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Coach Roger Barta and in expressing our gratitude for his positive impact on generations of young Kansans.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Hanley, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)