

more than a century, Estes Park has been the primary entrance point into one of our national treasures, Rocky Mountain National Park. Millions of tourists visit the national park each year, beginning their journey in Estes Park.

Before the formal incorporation of the town, many Native American tribes spent time in the region, including the Utes, Arapaho, Shoshone, and the Comanche. Settlers began to come to the area when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law in 1862, encouraging them to travel West and explore unchartered territory. In 1863, Joel and Patsy Estes traveled from Kentucky, in search of fertile land to begin their cattle ranch in Colorado, and they found it in the area that later bore their name. By 1874, many more settlers had traveled out West and made Estes Park their home.

The original Coloradans living in Estes Park were resourceful and ingenious, building schools and homes from the ground up in this rugged, mountainous terrain. The present Coloradans living in Estes Park are also resilient—surviving floods and severe damages to the town and surrounding area in 1982 and again in 2013. Following the devastation of the flooding in 2013, U.S. Highway 34, one of the main roads into Estes, was in need of extreme restoration. Through bipartisan efforts in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, the Colorado delegation was able to ensure this highway received the funding it required to keep the gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park open.

I would like to congratulate the Town of Estes Park on this exciting milestone, and I look forward to the town's many more years of prosperity and success.●

#### TRIBUTE TO THOMAS CERRA

● Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Thomas Cerra, a noble veteran, an inspiration to his community, and a beloved member of my home State of West Virginia.

Growing up in the northern panhandle of our beloved State, it is ingrained in each West Virginian that you have to work hard for what you want in life. Tom is indeed one of the hardest working men I know. Early on, he worked odd jobs during summers and after school and learned the value of a customer service mentality.

Prior to joining the military, Tom worked on the B&O Railroad, drove a truck for a meat-packing plant and worked for the State road, while also attending night school for industrial drafting.

In 1959, Tom joined the U.S. Army to serve his country and was honorably discharged in 1962. This experience only added to Tom's outstanding character, as he continued to develop his leadership skills and discipline. His service will never be forgotten.

One of my favorite stories about Tom is that, once he was discharged from the Army, he returned to the YMCA where he had trained and instructed for many years. It was the year of West Virginia's centennial celebration, and the community hosted the Mister West Virginia Centennial Weightlifting Contest. Tom won the top award in the 181-pound lifting class and the physique contest and was crowned "Mister West Virginia Centennial." Throughout all of his training, Tom never missed a day of work and still had time to get his weightlifting trophy engraved 2 weeks ahead of time. His sharp wit and sense of humor only add to his unforgettable character.

Tom worked all over the country, but found an opportunity to come home to Wheeling when he applied for a job with then-Ohio Valley Builders Exchange. After a few short years with the company, he convinced the board of directors to change the name of the company to more accurately define what they did, and so it became the Ohio Valley Construction Employers Council, Inc. Tom then led the charge to form a labor management organization in order to promote the contractors and building tradesmen to their customers. The group adjusted the name to Project BEST: Building Efficiency by Striving Together and was incorporated in 1982.

Project BEST is now comprised of hundreds of contractors and thousands of building trades craftsmen and apprentices in the Upper Ohio Valley region. This group is known for providing annual scholarships to area universities and colleges, promoting workplace safety and productivity, and provides a forum for the discussion of industry matters with all those involved with economic development endeavors.

What remained the same throughout the years was Tom's dedication to his parents, Christine and Thomas, and his brother, Jimmy, who always provided him with unwavering support throughout his career. It is my hope that he enjoys his well-deserved retirement with his loved ones—including his son, Bryan, his niece, Tina Marie, his grandchildren, Makayla, Angelina, and Wyatt, and his entire family.

Tom is the epitome of the American Dream. He worked hard his entire life and always stroved to give back to his community after he served his country. It is my great privilege to recognize his accomplishments and to extend thanks, on behalf of all West Virginians, for his unwavering service.●

#### TRIBUTE TO LUCIANO "LUCKY" VARELA

● Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to longtime New Mexico State Representative Luciano "Lucky" Varela, who passed away on September 2, 2017. Lucky served the State of New Mexico for over five decades—first as a financial expert for the State finance department and then as a respected

legislator in the New Mexico House of Representatives. We will remember Lucky as a champion for all of New Mexico, for his expertise and legislative skills, and also for his kindness, civility, and great heart.

Lucky was born to Celestino and Catalina Varela in Pecos, NM, on February 17, 1935. Growing up during and right after the Great Depression, his early jobs including hauling firewood to miners working near Pecos. He developed a strong work ethic and a love of the outdoors. Those early experiences informed his work in the State legislature, including his effort to keep New Mexico rivers and streams open to sportsmen and recreationists.

Lucky graduated from Pecos High School and joined the U.S. Army in 1957. He served 2 years in the Army and 6 years in the Army Reserve. He graduated from the College of Santa Fe with a degree in accounting. He then earned a law degree from LaSalle University.

Lucky worked as a comptroller for the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s. There he got to know the State's finances inside and out—knowledge that would be key to his success in the legislature.

After retiring from State government, Lucky couldn't sit still. He ran for a seat in the New Mexico House of Representatives and represented District 48 in Santa Fe for 30 years, from 1987 to 2016.

Lucky's knowledge of State finances was legion. It is said that he knew State agency finances better than the agency heads. He served as chair of the legislative finance committee and deputy chair of the house appropriations and finance committee. Lucky understood the numbers, but just as importantly, he understood the people behind those numbers—their struggles, hopes, and dreams. He championed public education, seniors, State employees, and technology, fighting for increases funding for public schools, higher salaries for teachers, raises for State employees, and modernizing State government technology.

During the fiscal crisis of 2009, Lucky is credited with singlehandedly developing the budget that balanced the budget and saved State finances. This ensured schools stayed open, State employees were not laid off, and State police got paid.

One of his final accomplishments was a 2013 bill he cosponsored to overhaul the Public Employees Retirement Association pension fund—helping make sure State retirees are secure in their retirement.

Lucky gave selflessly to the people of Santa Fe, the entire State of New Mexico, and our Nation, but he was even more devoted to family. Lucky is survived by his three children—Jeff, James, and Bernadette—and nine grandchildren. New Mexico is a better place thanks to Lucky's over 50 years of service. We will miss him dearly.●