

along to his wife and two children. Each one of these officers and firefighters we lost this year was a neighbor or loved one, a member of the community, and an extraordinary Coloradan who gave their life to protect their communities. While we remember those whom we lost this year, we must also continue to celebrate those who continue to serve today.

TRIBUTE TO OFFICER MICHAEL LOHMAN

Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, in August, I was fortunate to award Officer Michael Lohman of the Greeley Police Department with the Congressional Badge of Bravery for his heroic actions apprehending the driver of a stolen vehicle in 2017.

While at the driver-side window of the vehicle, the driver pulled a gun on Officer Lohman, who immediately engaged with the driver to take the weapon. The driver pulled Officer Lohman into the vehicle and began accelerating, dragging him along the street. Officer Lohman kept his cool and was able to pull the suspect from the vehicle while it was still moving and apprehended him with the help of other officers.

These actions saved the lives of anyone in the path of that vehicle, as well as the life of his partner who was at the passenger side of the vehicle when the gun was pulled. These actions give our communities peace of mind, knowing that heroes like Officer Lohman continue to keep all of us safe. But we know every brave action doesn't get the recognition that it deserves.

Every day, there are law enforcement and first responders who act with complete selflessness. They do this not to seek recognition or praise, but simply because it is what they were called to do.

Jamie and I would like to send our thanks to the families of our law enforcement and first responders. Every day these men and women say goodbye to their loved ones, unsure of what that day will hold for them. I am sure these goodbyes are much more difficult during the holiday season, but without the love and support of those at home, the jobs of law enforcement and our first responders would be that much more difficult. We thank them for their continued sacrifice.

RECOGNIZING THE U.S. CAPITOL POLICE

Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, I would also like to take a moment to say thanks to the men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police. They work long hours to ensure that Members of the staff and Members themselves are able to carry out their duties safely. On top of that important duty, they also protect the public who comes to visit to express their opinion, to express their right to assemble and free speech in the Capitol and beyond, not only to tour this beautiful Capitol Building, but to make sure their thoughts are heard on our Nation's policy issues.

I know every one of my colleagues will join us in expressing our gratitude to law enforcement and first responders not only in Colorado, but across this Nation this holiday season. They will give up time with their own families to make sure that others are safe.

To all those who defend that thin blue line, thank you, and God bless. You have my enduring support. May you all have a happy and blessed holiday season.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

TRIBUTE TO JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Madam President, today I rise for the opportunity to commend Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON on his retirement from the U.S. Senate.

I am a relatively new Member to the Senate, but I think we all remember the first time we ever walked onto the Senate floor. I know I certainly do because that is the day I met Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON.

With both of us being from the South, I knew we would probably have a lot in common, a similar view on life, and a heart for the South, but it didn't take me long to learn that JOHNNY has a universal heart.

I am guilty of the expression, "Nothing is special until you make it special." JOHNNY has such a generous gift of making things special. He has the gift of making everyone around him feel special. His heart and his attitude sees the best in people and yet goes further to let them know how much they mean to him.

He exemplifies being a leader, an encourager, and an investor of people. He is never too busy to ask how you are doing or to ask about your family. Common courtesy sometimes isn't always that common anymore, but I assure you it is with JOHNNY ISAKSON.

His brilliance is unquestionable. His ability to articulate what is important to him is just simply amazing. He can deliver a message that not only expresses his concern but also has answers and solutions based on his experience and his tremendous wisdom.

He is the gentle calm in a tremendous storm. He has the words of wisdom when so many are bewildered. He is the guiding light in the darkest times. He provides the needed laugh in times of tension and the voice of reason in times of uncertainty. His love is deep, and his compassion is true.

He knows how to be a friend. He was a born leader and has the ability to capture opportunities and turn them into successes. My world has been enhanced and enriched by this wonderful and precious human being.

JOHNNY learned a long time ago that the joy of living comes in giving. You know when a person has in his heart that joy, that wasn't put there by the world.

When I think about the true statesmen I have met in my brief time in the Senate, I will certainly have "Georgia on My Mind."

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Florida.

VENEZUELA

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, I rise to speak again today about the crisis in Venezuela—a defining human rights issue of our time.

Nicolas Maduro is starving his own people, and innocent children are dying. It is a genocide right here in our hemisphere. Every day that passes, the situation in Venezuela grows more dire.

The United States and all freedom-loving countries around the world must do more. As Governor, I strictly prohibited the State of Florida, including all State agencies, from investing in any company that did business with Maduro's repressive regime.

I am grateful for the bipartisan support this bill has received, and I specifically thank Senator ROSEN for her leadership and for joining me in this effort.

We must never give up on the fight for freedom, and I look forward to all of my colleagues joining me in support of the people of Venezuela.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate in Spanish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I stand with the people of Venezuela and will always fight for freedom and democracy in Latin America.

I understand my colleague has an objection. I am disappointed, but I look forward to working with him to address his concerns.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise to highlight several key parts of the appropriations package the Senate will be considering later on this week. First, I want to point out some statistics. Ninety-two thousand of our coal miners are counting on us to protect their pensions. Thirteen thousand coal miners are counting on us to protect their healthcare benefits. This week, we will have a chance to do just that.

I am very proud to have worked with our leader, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator MANCHIN, Senator PORTMAN, and others to introduce and champion the Bipartisan American Miners Act. I appreciate that my counterpart on the House side, Congressman DAVID MCKINLEY, has worked consistently and tirelessly on this bill in the House, along with our other Representatives from West Virginia, ALEX MOONEY and CAROL MILLER. Most of all, I appreciate the West Virginian miners and their families who have traveled to Washington to advocate for their promised benefits and for their communities. I

stood outside the Capitol with thousands of coal miners and their families several years ago in seriously suffocating heat, as DC can heat up during the summer, to rally in support of those benefits. Miners have come to Washington in the snow and in the rain. Their camouflage shirts have stood out around the Capitol as they worked tirelessly to educate us about the critical need for action. You have probably seen them in the halls. No one should be surprised by their dedication and commitment because our West Virginian miners have answered the call throughout their careers. Their hard work provided the electricity and the steel that has powered our American economy.

The time has come to protect those retirement benefits these miners have earned. The Bipartisan American Miners Act will secure both pension and healthcare benefits for those hard-working men and women.

I want to thank the United Mine Workers of America and their president, Cecil Roberts, for his work and their work in advocating for our miners. More than 25,000 miners from all of West Virginia's 55 counties will have received payments from their pension benefits last year.

More than 5,600 West Virginians miners are at risk of losing their healthcare benefits if we fail to act. Almost \$200 million in pension benefits were paid from this fund to West Virginians last year. The loss of those funds would certainly have harmed the retirees themselves, no doubt, but also the local businesses they patronize across the State and their communities.

As one West Virginian wrote to me just last night, "My father is a retired miner from Marion County who will be turning 80 in January. This will give him and my mother some long overdue and well deserved peace of mind. They have been worrying unduly throughout the last several months."

Thousands of miners in West Virginia and elsewhere in coal country will have a merrier Christmas when this bill becomes law later this week. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this critical legislation.

There are a number of other reasons to support the appropriations bills we will be considering in the next several days. I wanted to highlight one that can have a significant impact on my State of West Virginia.

I was proud to ensure that in the transportation and infrastructure title of the appropriations bill, we fund the Appalachian Development Highway System at \$100 million. That will help us as we work to continue the last remaining enormous project in our State, Corridor H.

I have also advocated for action to address our structurally deficient bridges. In my State, we have a lot of hills and a lot of valleys, and we have a lot of bridges. Almost 20 percent of our West Virginia bridges are classified

as structurally deficient. I think it is a universal statistic in the country. This bill takes the absolutely necessary step to provide funding for over \$1.15 billion to fund highway bridge projects of which West Virginia is eligible for \$50 million.

Roads and bridges have a huge economic impact on our communities and our quality of life, everything we do every day. I am proud we have included these important investments.

As chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I want to address items included in our subcommittee's funding bill as well. A little over a year ago, I stood here to talk about the increasing crisis at our southern border. When I spoke to you then, apprehensions at our southern border were 30 percent higher than they were the year before, and they were much higher than they are today, as I speak. The crisis was not limited to the realm of illegal immigrants because fentanyl seizures were up 115 percent, along with other illicit narcotics: heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana. Thanks to the leadership of the President and also this Congress the situation has improved.

We should also recognize the improved coordination with Mexico and partnerships with other countries that have helped curb the flow of those entering our country illegally. Though the situation has improved, it is far from being solved. Frankly, we are one ruling away from an activist judge who could create the flows of those trending upward again.

As such, I am proud to say that the homeland security title in the package we are considering this week provides funds and resources to continue the good work we have been pursuing to stem the tide of illegal immigration. Twice I have seen firsthand on the border—the southwest border—the challenges we face—and, yes, the progress we have made.

This bill supports the work of the men and women of the Department at CBP, ICE, HSI, the Coast Guard, and many others who are daily standing watch on our borders, on our coasts, and on our computer networks.

This bill invests in personnel, particularly by creating a new position: Border Patrol processing coordinators. This was a particular interest of mine after talking to numerous people at the Department and while visiting the border, describing the frustration they felt as agents and officers. This funding provided for these processing coordinators will return 240 of our border agents to the frontlines to enforce our immigration laws, which is what they are trained to do.

In regard to physical barriers, we provide the enacted level of \$1.37 billion. The only thing similar to last year is the amount of money provided because the flexibility we provide the Department is a significant change and a significant improvement.

The bipartisan fiscal year 2017 appropriations bill required our Customs and

Border Protection to provide us with a comprehensive Border Security Improvement Plan. I was going to bring it with me today, but, to be honest with you, I left it in my office. The funds we provide this week will enable the Department to follow that plan.

While passage of our Senate bill would have been ideal, a continuing resolution would have had a devastating effect on homeland security. The bill we are going to pass will help us take another step forward in securing our border.

I am so very proud of the men and women who work at the Department of Homeland Security, and I was able to meet quite a few. The crisis they faced when I spoke here last year was a real one. Through their dedication and efforts, so much progress has been made, and I look forward to speaking to you a year from now about what we have been able to accomplish with the resources and tools we can provide them with this bill.

There are many other vital provisions across our appropriations bill, including a 3.1-percent pay increase for our troops and significant increases in funding for our veterans for the MISSION Act, increasing funding for combating the opioid epidemic, expanding our rural broadband, and researching cures for diseases.

One of those diseases hit many of us and has hit me quite personally; that is, Alzheimer's. Research for Alzheimer's is, I think, absolutely essential, and we are increasing that.

I commend all my colleagues who worked to put together the bipartisan appropriations bills. I congratulate Senator SHELBY, in particular, and Senator LEAHY for working together, and I look forward to voting for these bills later in the week.

With that, I yield back.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, December 22 will mark an anniversary, the second anniversary of the signing of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Tax reform was a big priority for Republicans. We wanted to help American families by reducing their tax burden and spurring the kind of economic growth that would result in better jobs and better wages.

At the end of 2017, we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. We cut tax rates for American families, doubled the child tax credit, and nearly doubled the standard deduction. We lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small and medium-sized businesses, farms and ranches. We expanded business owners' ability to recover the cost of investments made in their businesses, which frees up cash they can reinvest into operations and their workers, and we lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which up until January 1 of 2018 was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world,