MEETING AGENDA
PPACG LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
September 18, 2023, 8:30 a.m.

In Person
PPACG Upper Conference Room – 15 S. 7th St., Colorado Springs, CO 80905

Microsoft Teams (Video and Audio)
www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/join-a-meeting
Meeting ID: 221 870 832 475
Passcode: DikQNZ

Dial in (Audio Only)
Phone Number: (929) 242-8427
Conference ID: 212 244 107

Meeting will be held in a hybrid format to allow in-person attendance as well as a remote option.

1. Call to Order – Commissioner Stone and/or Mayor Dixon
2. Information Items
   A. Federal updates handout
3. Discussion Items
   A. 2024 Legislative Brochure
   B. 2023 Fall Legislative Roundtable
4. Member open discussion
5. Next meeting and potential topics
   A. Oct. 9, 2023 – 8:30 a.m.

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities. Meeting materials are available in text-only and audio formats. Meetings are available to join remotely via Microsoft Teams, and meetings include live transcription for remote and in-person attendees using automated software. Should you require any additional auxiliary aids or services to participate, please contact ppacg@ppacg.org or (719) 471-7080 x139 as soon as possible so that we can do our best to accommodate your needs.

Si necesita ayuda con traducción, llame por favor al (719) 471-7080 x139 o correo electrónico ppacg@ppacg.org.
Federal updates compiled by Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments

Sept. 15, 2023

Jump to:

- National Association of Regional Councils
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Updates from federal delegation
  - Senator Bennett
  - Senator Hickenlooper
  - Senators Bennet/Hickenlooper
  - Representative Lamborn
  - Representative Petterson
CONGRESS

The House and Senate are in session.

Congress Looks Ahead to a Busy Fall Session
Fights over federal spending and military policy will dominate the fall and winter legislative session, meaning work on ironing out deep partisan differences on other legislation might be punted into next year. Several rounds of negotiations on federal spending levels, border security and additional aid to Ukraine will dominate the balance of September, senators from both parties said last week. Both chambers also must hammer out a compromise version of the fiscal 2024 defense authorization bill, then send a final version to Biden's desk. Both chambers also must deal with two expiring high-profile authorizations: One for farm and agricultural policy and another for the Federal Aviation Administration. Some members expect some bills already approved by committees could hitch a ride on the final spending package or the defense bill. But with little expectation of any other major policy legislation moving, those bills face an uncertain fate in 2024, an election year. Members are typically not keen to hand the other party legislative wins on which to run in the months before an election.

T&I Committee to Question Secretary Buttigieg in DOT Oversight Hearing
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) announced that the Committee will hold an oversight hearing with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg where Members will have the opportunity to question the Secretary on a range of issues, including the lack of a confirmed Administrator at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), supply chain and energy issues, and electric vehicle infrastructure policies. The hearing, entitled “Oversight of the Department of Transportation’s Policies and Programs,” will be held at 10:00 a.m. ET on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building.

The Impact of EVs on the Highway Trust Fund
A short paper released by the Bipartisan Policy Center considers the transportation funding implications of electric vehicles (EVs). There is little controversy in stating that the nation's Highway Trust Fund (HTF) – the primary source of federal funding for surface transportation projects – has been fundamentally unsound for some time. Thought it was at one time funded solely with receipts from the federal fuel tax and other transportation-related taxes, in the past decade or so it has required billions in transfers of additional funds – most recently, $118 billion to cover the five years of the IIJA – to maintain the level of spending required to keep up with the nation's infrastructure demands. This lack of soundness can be traced to several factors that BPC mentions. Failure to raise or index the federal fuel tax in the past thirty years – thereby dramatically eroding its purchasing power in the face of ever-increasing inflation – is probably the biggest factor. Improving the fuel efficiency of the nation's fleet of vehicles has also had an impact, and this will accelerate as new CAFÉ standards begin to take effect and overall efficiency improves even more. And with that is an additional emerging factor: increasing numbers of electric vehicles that are showing up on our roads that contribute nothing to the HTF and inflict more damage because of their heavier weight. This is certainly a topic that will garner additional attention in the next transportation reauthorization. With many states taking action to offset this impact to their own fuel tax receipts, we are also hearing of some potential Congressional ideas that would offset the impact to the federal HTF.

Open or Closed – It's Anyone's Guess
With just 19 calendar days left in fiscal year (FY) 2023, whether Congress can pass, and the president can sign the necessary appropriations bills to fund the federal government beyond the end of this fiscal year remains an open question. House conservatives are expressing deep concerns about passing a continuing resolution, while Senate Democrats and Republicans continue their bipartisan work to keep the government open. Even if both chambers agree to a CR to keep the government open lawmakers will still likely have only a few months to reconcile House and Senate appropriations bills that are likely to diverge sharply on policy and spending levels.
The Senate is expected to take up H.R. 4366 today (Sept. 12). The House-passed bill to fund Military Construction and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is being combined with two other appropriations bills as part of Senate leaders’ efforts to avoid a government shutdown on October 1. The Senate version of the bill combines funding for Military Construction and VA with separate funding bills for the Department of Agriculture, and the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. The bill is expected to pass with significant bi-partisan support.

According to CQ Morning Briefing, the combined appropriations bill would provide more than $20 billion for the Department of Agriculture and $6.6 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, about $10 billion more than the House version of the same bill. The Military Construction-VA bill would provide $135.5 billion for the VA and $19 billion for military construction programs. Funding for the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, set at $99 billion, would provide $28.4 billion for the Transportation Department and $70.1 billion for the Housing and Urban Development Department. The bill would ignore the House's plan to rescind $25 billion in Internal Revenue Service funding provided in last year's tax and clean energy law (PL 117-169) to fund transportation and housing programs.

And There is More . . . Way More
Congress faces other consequential deadlines. On September 30, a number of programs important to cities, counties, and regions will end unless Congress reauthorizes them. The biggest one is the farm bill that includes subsidies for all kinds of agricultural products and programs including funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or food stamps. Congress is also due to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFPI). The latter may result in major price increases for flood insurance consumers. These increases may have a major impact on the cost of insuring homes in storm and flood zones across the country, and the value of the property being insured. Supplemental emergency funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to cover the costs of disasters in Maui, Florida, Vermont, California, and elsewhere, is also critical. The Administration has requested $16 billion in emergency funding for FEMA. Without these additional funds FEMA may not be able to provide the assistance to states and localities it is mandated to provide. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) that provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods for low-income mothers, pregnant women, and their children, is also running out of funds. As a result, states may not be able to enroll everyone who is qualified to receive benefits. Childcare subsidies may also end on September 30, in which case, “more than half of the childcare centers in Arkansas, Montana, Utah, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia would go out of business,” according to the Century Foundation.

ADMINISTRATION

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Next Phase of Thriving Communities Grant Program to Help More Communities Unlock Access to Historic Infrastructure Investments
The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for up to $22 million in grants to provide technical assistance and a Call for Letters of Interest from communities seeking support through the Thriving Communities Program. The Biden-Harris Administration launched the program in 2022 to prepare state, local, Tribal and territorial governments to better access historic levels of federal funding for projects in their communities. Earlier this year, DOT announced that four Capacity Builder teams received $21.15 million to provide technical assistance to 64 communities. DOT also anticipates funding at least three National TCP Capacity Builder Program teams, at approximately $5 million each, to collectively support approximately 50 communities that are selected and assigned by DOT into one of three “Communities of Practice” based on their unique technical assistance needs. The TCP will prioritize those communities working to advance projects to improve health outcomes; reduce housing and transportation costs; preserve or expand jobs and increase reliable mobility options for disadvantaged households to better access health care, food, education, and other essential destinations. The call for Letters of Interest (LOI) from communities seeking support from the program is open until November 15, while the NOFO for Capacity Builders is open until November 28.
Biden-Harris Administration to Invest $100 Million for EV Charger Reliability
The Biden-Harris Administration opened applications for the Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator which will provide up to $100 million in Federal funding to repair and replace existing but non-operational, electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. These targeted investments will complement hundreds of billions in private sector investment, support good paying jobs across the country installing, maintaining, and repairing EV infrastructure, and make our current charging network more reliable. Reliability is a critical component to the Biden-Harris Administration's comprehensive approach to build a convenient, affordable, reliable, equitable, and Made-in-America national EV charging network. The program is informed by the U.S. Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels Data Center (AFDC) Station Locator, which identifies offline stations as temporarily unavailable. A charger can be identified as temporarily unavailable for several reasons, ranging from routine maintenance to power issues. On September 11, 2023, the AFDC indicated that out of 151,506 public charging ports, 6,261 (4.1%) were temporarily unavailable. Eligible applicants and projects for the EV Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator are outlined in a Notice of Funding Opportunity. Applications are due by November 13, 2023.

Biden-Harris Administration Announces More Than $80 Million in Grants to Improve Highway Safety, Including Better Access to Truck Parking
The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) announced more than $80 million in grant awards from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This historic funding will help reduce the frequency and severity of commercial motor vehicle crashes on our nation's roadways and support truck drivers by expanding access to truck parking, investing in critical technology, improving safety in work zones, rural areas and high crash corridors, and more. Grant recipients include states, local governments, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions across the country. The High Priority grants include a 65% increase in funding for truck parking projects over last year and enhance critical efforts to support truck drivers and improve safety. Please visit FMCSA's grant program page for additional information on the discretionary application announcement, review, and approval process.

FEMA Seeks Public Input on Simplifying Preparedness Grants
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Thursday issued a notice in the Federal Register requesting public input into ways that it can simplify the management and administration of preparedness grant programs. FEMA says that it is trying to “gain better understanding of how to continue to assist the nation and first responders in building, sustaining and improving our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate terrorism and other high-consequence disasters and emergencies.” Specifically, FEMA wants suggestions on how to:

- Improve management and administration of grant programs by simplifying application processes and enhancing customer service.
- Ensure greater accessibility and equity for under-resourced communities.

Individuals and organizations may submit comments by November 7, at 5:00 p.m. eastern through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Comments can also be submitted to FEMA by emailing FEMA-Grants-Feedback@fema.dhs.gov. Comments are due no later than 5 p.m. ET on Nov. 7. FEMA plans to host two public listening sessions and one tribal consultation to allow interested parties to provide feedback. The public listening sessions will be held on Thursday, September 14, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. eastern (Register to attend) and Tuesday, September 26, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. eastern (Register to attend). The tribal consultation will be held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. eastern (Register to attend).

OTHER FEDERAL NEWS

LIHEAP Funds Evaporate as Heatwaves Continue
Funds to help low-income individuals cover the cost of cooling in the wake of this summer's heatwaves are rapidly being depleted. According to Scientific American's E&E News, more than 30 million low-income households that are eligible for federal funding to defray the cost of air conditioning have not received any money from the Low-Income
Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The dearth of cooling assistance comes “during a summer of unprecedented climate catastrophes, including the hottest month on record.”

The Department of Health and Human Services distributes roughly $4 billion a year in LIHEAP funds to states to help residents pay for air conditioning and heating and equipment repairs. However, “in 16 states, including some with significant heat risk, not a single household received money to pay cooling costs from 2001 through 2021, according to E&E News’ analysis of federal records,” because the program largely focuses on providing heating assistance. E&E News’ analysis also found that on average, 5.3 million U.S. households a year got heating assistance from 2001 through 2021. The average number of households that received cooling assistance was 635,000. The problem lies, in part, in federal funding levels. Last year the program received approximately $4.4 billion in funding -- $3.4 billion in regular block grant funding and $1 billion in supplemental funding, insufficient to meet the real need. In addition, the federal funding formula favors states that provide home heating assistance. For fiscal year (FY) 2024, the Administration has requested nearly $4.1 billion; the Senate has recommended the same, while the House has recommended $4 billion. All are not sufficient to meet the emerging needs for heating and cooling assistance, according to the association that represents state LIHEAP directors.

NACo Urges Local Elected Officials to Forge Better Relationships with their State Legislators and the Press
Over the past decade state legislatures have increasingly passed laws that reduce or eliminate home rule and local authority. According to NACo, more than 600 different preemptive laws have been proposed by legislatures, this year alone. They are, as one state association of counties director put it, “deregulatory and sweeping in nature — some of the academics call them ‘the nuclear bombs of preemptions.’” This same director said that from her perspective there are for reasons this is happening. They are:

- Population growth, which in turn leads to diversity and a “less unified way of thinking.”
- Counties asking for state and federal funding at unprecedented levels.
- State governments expanding their capacity to provide services that were previously controlled by counties.
- The erosion of the local press.

While these preemptory laws are being passed everywhere, the largest problem exists in states where the governor and the legislature are of the same party, especially when the party controlling the legislature has a super majority. To avoid this state association of counties directors are urging their members to establish very positive relationships with their legislators so that legislators understand that local elected officials and they share the same goals and objectives, and to court the local press, which can still have significant influence over legislative decisions even as the number of local newspapers continues to decline.

Home Prices Rise; Affordability Declines
According to the Wall Street Journal the recent decline in housing prices may be over, signaling an end to the most recent real-estate downturn, and a decrease in the home-buying affordability index. The five-month dip in housing prices ended in July when the national median existing-home price rose 1.9 percent from a year earlier to $406,700. In August, prices in 30 of the 50 biggest markets hit record prices. According to mortgage data and technology company Black Knight, high interest rates are contributing to a scarcity of available housing – many homeowners with lower mortgage rates are staying put -- which, in turn, is contributing to the rise in prices. And when sellers do sell, they are receiving multiple bids on their homes, further escalating the final sales price. As a result, the NAR housing-affordability index, which factors in family incomes, mortgage rates and the sales price for existing single-family homes, fell to its lowest level in almost 38 years in June, putting housing out of the reach of most buyers and further exacerbating the lack of affordable housing.

CRFB Issues Statement Urging Congress to Avoid a Government Shutdown
The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB) on Thursday issued a statement urging Congress to pass either the necessary appropriations bills or a continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a government shutdown. Noting that for the 27th year in a row it appears that Congress will be unable to complete the appropriations process on time, CFRB urged Congress to pass a CR “to keep the lights on.” Finding fault with the actions of both the House and Senate, the CFRB urged House conservatives to either make specific policy decisions or set up a bipartisan fiscal
committee to find further savings beyond what was negotiated in the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) that raised the debt ceiling. CFRB also criticized the Senate for working on a bi-partisan basis to boost spending above the FRA levels by classifying $14 billion of ordinary appropriations as ‘emergency spending.’ The House and Senate “need to honor the deal agreed to in the FRA; fund the government on time either through appropriations or a CR, but absolutely avoid a juvenile and inexcusable shutdown; and they need to turn their attention to creating a bipartisan effort to confront our fiscal challenges,” the statement said.
On September 11th, AMPO provided comments on the FTA's proposed guidelines for urban area grants (read here). AMPO expressed support for FTA's modernization efforts but also offered pointed suggestions for improvement. The objective of AMPO's input is to improve the effectiveness and transparency of federal transit programs from the perspective of MPOs.
Updates from federal delegation

SENATOR BENNET

As Tech CEOs Come to Washington, Bennet Pushes For New Federal Body to Oversee Big Tech

Denver — This week, as U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) kicked off his Senate AI Insight Forum, Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet called for a dedicated federal agency to oversee Big Tech companies and assert the public interest. On Wednesday, Bennet also urged Schumer to adopt a principles-based approach as the Senate considers writing legislation on artificial intelligence (AI).

At the Axios Pro Happy Hour with Ashley Gold, Bennet said:

“I think it's really important for us, for the Senate to say to these folks, we have failed to have a negotiation with you on economics, on privacy, on data on behalf of the American people. And we intend to do that.”

“I'm going to continue to have this discussion with people in Colorado and across the country because I think it really is important... I don't think Congress will ever effectively legislate. I don't think the White House will ever effectively legislate.

“I think we need an agency that's dedicated to these subjects, especially with AI, that has the expertise to be able to be engaged with my constituents, and also with Big Tech, to come to a set of rules of the road that over time, through sort of a common law regulatory approach makes sense for the sector today.”

On Fox News' Your World with Neil Cavuto, Bennet said:

“The American people have never been able to negotiate on economics, on privacy, on data with some of the richest people on planet Earth.

“I think the way of dealing with that is to create an agency like the FCC or like the FDA, both of which have earned the trust of the American people, and can move maybe not at light speed, but compared to Congress, could actually move in a thoughtful and considered way as we think about creating, frankly, a new common law to regulate these agencies and establish for the American people a leadership position the globe when it comes to setting standards.”

Watch the full interview HERE.

On NBC’s Meet the Press Now with Garrett Haake, Bennet said:

“We need to have a new agency to regulate Big Tech. I am the first member of Congress to introduce a bill calling for that, and it was kind of an amazing out-of-body experience to be there to hear Elon Musk saying we need an agency like that.

“But I think the reason we need it is that Congress will never do a good job of this. Leaving this to the courts would be a huge mistake; and I think what we need to do is instead – as we have in the past in American history – set up a new agency with the expertise that can move nimbly enough to help us capture the benefits of this new technology while making sure that, in the case of AI, we've got guardrails in place so that people can't go out and build nuclear weapons or create pathogens that could kill millions of people. That's stuff we need to take seriously, that's stuff that we need to avoid, and it's why we've got to do this.”

Watch the full interview HERE.

On NewsNation's The Hill, Bennet said:
“The American people want to have a frickin’ negotiation with these guys... We have not had a negotiation on data. We haven't had a negotiation on privacy, we haven't had a negotiation on our economics. And that's even before you get to artificial intelligence. That's just the social media companies themselves.

“I was a former school superintendent. I spent an hour and a half on Friday with school psychologists in Denver. And I can tell you something: they couldn't even get to their patients because they were spending an hour and a half talking about how their kids had been so negatively affected by social media, even before artificial intelligence.”

“I think a very good step would be to have an FCC, an agency like that, that is dedicated to social media and artificial intelligence.”

Watch the full interview HERE.

Background:

Bennet has pushed strongly for greater regulation of digital platforms. In May, Bennet reintroduced the Digital Platform Commission Act, first-of-its-kind legislation to create a dedicated federal agency to oversee large technology companies. In June, Bennet called on major technology companies to identify and label AI-generated content, and introduced the Global Technology Leadership Act to bolster the government's ability to assess U.S. capacity in emerging technologies relative to other countries. Bennet earlier introduced the Oversee Emerging Technology Act and the ASSESS AI Act to ensure government use of AI complies with fundamental rights, and joined his colleagues to introduce the REAL Political Ads Act to require a disclaimer on political ads for federal campaigns that use content generated by AI.

**Bennet Lays Out AI Principles and Requirements**

*Bennet Urges Leader Schumer to Consider AI Labels, Disclosures, Risk Assessments, and Audits*

Washington, D.C. — Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet urged U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) to adopt a principles-based approach as the Senate considers writing legislation on artificial intelligence (AI). This letter comes as Schumer's AI Insight Forums kick off today.

“Creating an AI ecosystem that fosters innovation, increases accountability, and aligns with our fundamental values should be at the top of our country's legislative agenda,” wrote Bennet in the letter. “When considering the appropriate framework for AI regulation, we should keep in mind our continuing failure to regulate social media platforms effectively. When these platforms first emerged, they seemed to pose few material, psychological, or democratic risks...Repeating our oversight failure when it comes to more powerful technologies like AI would be disastrous.”

Bennet calls on Schumer to ensure any legislative framework reflects fundamental American values, including privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. He highlights the need for regular public risk assessments and audits to examine the safety, reliability, security, explainability, and efficacy of AI systems, and underscores the importance of AI labeling requirements, disclosure standards, and data transparency.

“A robust AI regulatory framework will require AI developers to construct their systems so that they preserve Americans' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties; protect against bias and discrimination; ensure safe environments for our children; and secure the integrity of our civic processes—not as afterthoughts, but throughout the design, testing, and deployment process,” continued Bennet. “As you have made clear, this task is too significant to be left to one Member, one Committee, or Congress alone. As we design an appropriate AI framework, we will need a collaborative approach that engages AI experts and developers as well as the insights of the American people.”

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The text of the letter is available HERE and below.

Dear Leader Schumer:

I applaud your recent release of the SAFE Innovation Framework for Artificial Intelligence (AI). Creating an AI ecosystem that fosters innovation, increases accountability, and aligns with our fundamental values should be at the top of our country's legislative agenda.

When considering the appropriate framework for AI regulation, we should keep in mind our continuing failure to regulate social media platforms effectively. When these platforms first emerged, they seemed to pose few material, psychological, or democratic risks. As a result, they evolved with few limitations. Now, we are intimately aware that even seemingly innocuous digital products can have deeply damaging effects on mental health, civic discourse, democratic legitimacy, and Americans' economic agency. Repeating our oversight failure when it comes to more powerful technologies like AI would be disastrous.

As you work to develop this regulatory framework, I think it would be useful to hold several, critical elements in mind:

A Values-Based Framework. From the outset, AI regulation must incorporate our fundamental values. A robust AI regulatory framework will require AI developers to construct their systems so that they preserve Americans' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties; protect against bias and discrimination; ensure safe environments for our children; and secure the integrity of our civic processes—not as afterthoughts, but throughout the design, testing, and deployment process. A regulatory architecture premised on these principles will preserve cutting-edge innovation without abandoning the foundational ideals that underpin our democratic society.

Public Risk Assessments, Mitigation, and Audits. AI systems should undergo regular public risk assessments to examine their safety, reliability, security, explainability, and efficacy. We should couple these assessments with transparency and disclosure obligations to enable effective compliance audits. AI system risk assessment requirements should apply throughout the AI lifecycle, from the development stage through the post-market period, and should be conducted in an ongoing manner by AI system end-users.

AI systems that pose higher risk should undergo regular third-party audits. Organizational Audits would focus on the practices of complex AI system developers and assess a company's governance models, corporate structure, development processes, information security, safety culture, and risk management practices. Technical Audits would be designed to detect dangerous capabilities and the propensity of higher risk AI models to cause harm.

Content Indicators. AI-generated content should retain a distinct, easily recognizable signifier, such as a watermark, hard-coded indicator, or visual overlay, so users can readily identify AI content as AI content. Platforms hosting content without such a signifier should affix their own (or remove the content).

AI Disclosure. AI platforms should disclose their AI nature at the beginning of a user's interaction and periodically throughout in order to ensure that users understand what sort of system they are encountering.

Data Transparency. Users must understand how AI systems intend to use, store, and transfer their personal data. Users should have a right to know how their data will contribute to any AI system's training or optimization. Users
should be informed about how their data, generated by interactions with AI systems, are used. Users should have the right through “optin” procedures to determine whether AI systems can collect and use their data.

AI’s rapid development is a testament to American innovation. We should welcome its potential benefits to our economy and society. AI’s responsible deployment—consistent with American values—will require clear policies and frameworks to promote safety, anticipate risk, and mitigate harm. As you have made clear, this task is too significant to be left to one Member, one Committee, or Congress alone. As we design an appropriate AI framework, we will need a collaborative approach that engages AI experts and developers as well as the insights of the American people.

I am grateful for your leadership, and look forward to working with you on this essential project. Our future depends on getting it right.

Sincerely,

Bennet Statement on Senate AI Insight Forum
Washington, D.C. – Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet released the following statement upon the completion of the Senate’s inaugural AI Insight Forum:

“Today’s forum reinforced that we need a new, independent agency to regulate AI and social media. This will best enable us to engage with new technologies while mitigating potential harms. Big Tech has written its own rules for too long. We cannot continue to allow these companies to continue to transform American life with no guardrails. Washington needs to stand up for the American people, who have never had a say in how Big Tech uses their data, addicts their kids, and tears at the fabric of our nation. Now is the time for America to set the standard for the rest of the world.”

Bennet Statement on Skyrocketing Child Poverty
Washington, D.C. — The Census Bureau released its annual report, showing that childhood poverty more than doubled last year. Its findings reveal an almost 140 percent increase in a single year. Five million new American children now live in poverty. Colorado U.S. Senator Michael Bennet released the following statement:

“The United States is the wealthiest country in the world, and we have failed our most vulnerable children. Ninety percent of Colorado kids felt what it was like to have enough food on the table, bikes to ride, and school supplies in their backpacks because of the expanded Child Tax Credit.

“Congress plunged five million new kids into poverty when we refused to extend the Child Tax Credit for American families. These tax cuts were a lifeline to working people and we must restore the Child Tax Credit and make it permanent.”

Background:

Bennet has long led the fight to eliminate child poverty and has been a tireless advocate for expanding the Child Tax Credit (CTC). In 2021, Bennet worked with the Biden Administration to enact a one-year expansion of the Child Tax Credit – based on his American Family Act – in the American Rescue Plan that President Joe Biden signed into law. This expansion cut child poverty nearly in half and hunger for families by a quarter in 2021. It also benefited 90 percent of Colorado children and helped lift nearly 3 million children out of poverty nationwide.

SENATOR HICKENLOOPER

Hickenlooper, Peters Introduce BIG WIRES Act to Reform Permitting, Lower Energy Costs

Bill would establish requirements to make electric grid more reliable and resilient
WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper and Representative Scott Peters introduced the Building Integrated Grids With Inter-Regional Energy Supply (BIG WIRES) Act, legislation to update and streamline the country's patchwork energy transmission system.

“If we want to maintain our national security amidst growing international conflict, make our power system more reliable, and cut high energy costs for Americans, we can't have a faulty, outdated electric grid,” said Hickenlooper. “Our bill advances two priorities simultaneously: make electricity more affordable and build a power grid fit for the 21st century.”

“During a heatwave, hurricane, or other natural disaster, the last thing you want is for the power to go out. It can be the difference between life and death,” said Peters. “There is no reason neighboring electrical grids should not have the capacity to share power during these situations to avoid blackouts. The associated buildout of electric transmission lines would greatly improve reliability and keep costs down for consumers. BIG WIRES will help get clean, reliable energy from where it is produced to where it is used by people, but above all else, it is an American energy security and independence bill.”

In an age of energy innovation, the United States’ electrical grid still can't move large amounts of energy from one part of the country to another. Meanwhile, new energy projects are stuck paying expensive fees to connect numerous, smaller transmission lines to the existing grid, like building new highways to crisscross the U.S every time we want to connect two towns. This haphazard buildout has led to lower reliability and higher costs for consumers.

Hickenlooper and Peters' legislation, which will be formally submitted Monday, proposes a fix to this issue by directing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to better coordinate construction of an interregional transmission system. Specifically, the bill would require each of the FERC transmission planning regions to be able to transfer 30% of their peak electrical loads to neighboring regions, working to close current gaps in the nation's transmission network: instead of building new highways, building new exit ramps off the existing interstate.

The BIG WIRES Act would:

- Improve Electrical Grid Reliability: Establishing minimum-transfer requirements would enable greater interregional power flows, which is key to electrical grid resilience against extreme weather events like Winter Storms Uri and Elliott.
- Reduce Energy Costs: Upgraded transfer capabilities would dramatically lower energy costs for American families, both by allowing regions where power prices are cheap to sell to regions where it is more expensive, and by allowing all regions to connect new, low-cost resources to the grid.
- Be Tech-Neutral: All types of generation – fossil, renewable, and nuclear – need transmission to connect to the grid. Relieving grid congestion gets energy where it is needed, more efficiently.
- Prioritize Regional Flexibility: In meeting the minimum-transfer requirements outlined in the bill, FERC regions decide how they will upgrade their systems.

Notably, this bill would cost the government no money. Instead, utilities and transmission developers within each of the transmission planning regions would be responsible for upgrading the grid. Because interregional transmission makes the grid more efficient, in the same way that interstates make our road systems more efficient, money spent on new lines would be more than offset by savings on numerous smaller projects.

The BIG WIRES Act garnered national attention in May when it was proposed as a possible component to a debt ceiling compromise.

View quotes of support for the legislation HERE and a one-page explainer of the bill HERE.

Full text of the bill is available HERE.
ICYMI: Hickenlooper Hosts Town Hall with AARP to Celebrate Medicare Negotiating Drug Prices

Thanks to the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act, Medicare finally has the ability to negotiate prescription drug prices.

Yesterday (Sept. 13), U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper joined a public Town Hall with AARP members to celebrate lower drug prices for Medicare recipients. The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in August of 2022, grants Medicare the unprecedented authority to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies to lower drug prices.

Medicare recently announced the first ten drugs they will negotiate. The list includes some of the most widespread, expensive drugs that Americans use to treat common illnesses including diabetes, blood clots, heart failure, kidney disease, blood cancers, and arthritis.

More than 1,800 people tuned in live and submitted questions.

Check out the highlights below:

On the significance of Medicare negotiating prices:

“...The [Inflation Reduction Act] provides Medicare the authority to negotiate the prices of some of the most widely used and some of the most expensive drugs in existence.

Passing the Inflation Reduction Act was not easy, it took a lot of grit, a lot of threats. Elections have consequences. We had enough people committed to lowering the cost of prescription drugs for seniors that we were able to get it passed.”

On the Inflation Reduction Act capping out-of-pocket costs for seniors:

“I think there's a silver lining here. The Inflation Reduction Act caps out of pocket costs for seniors to $2,000 a year – and that's for all of your pharmaceuticals. So, the whole point of that is filling in the ‘donut hole’ [in Medicare Part D]. It's been a real problem for a long, long time.”

On Medicare price negotiation lowering drug costs for all Americans beyond just Medicare enrollees:

“It’s worth pointing out that as we [negotiate] these 10 drugs, once that price is negotiated down, I think it's likely that people who are younger – let's say they've got health insurance but they get a disease where they need one of these drugs – I think the price will come down for them as well. I wouldn't be surprised if this whole process puts downward pressure on drug costs.”

On making health care more affordable:

“Health care is a right not a privilege, and that's a basic premise and a foundation of where we want to get...I think what we are doing with the Inflation Reduction Act: capping the prices for seniors, picking ten drugs out and making drug companies negotiate their price – these are big steps forward which will be very popular once people understand and realize what is really happening.”

On bipartisanship around health care:

“I think there's a strong bipartisan commitment to protect Medicare and to make sure that we do a consistently better job of delivering affordable, and quality health care that is reliably accessible to all Americans.”

VIDEO: Hickenlooper Takes to Senate Floor To Applaud Lower Drug Prices

“This is the beginning of the end of Americans getting the short end of the stick from pharmaceutical companies peddling prescription drugs.”
WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper spoke on the Senate floor yesterday to emphasize the impact of Medicare’s new ability to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies to lower drug prices. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, which the Senate passed in August 2022, Medicare is now able to negotiate prescription drug prices for the first time ever. Medicare recently announced the first ten drugs they will negotiate.

For a full video of Hickenlooper’s remarks, click HERE.

“For years, we’ve all been paying much more than those in other countries pay for the same drugs. But now, Medicare is taking the first step towards ending that stranglehold on life-saving drugs,” Hickenlooper said on the Senate floor.

“The Bottom Line: seniors on Medicare are getting ripped off. And going forward they are finally going to spend less on the prescription drugs that they need, in many cases, just to stay alive.”

To download full video of Hickenlooper’s remarks, click HERE. A full transcript of his remarks is available below:

“Well, this is the beginning of the end for Americans getting the short end of the stick from pharmaceutical companies peddling prescription drugs. For years, we’ve all been paying much more than those in other countries pay for the same drugs. But now, Medicare is taking the first step towards ending that stranglehold on life-saving drugs.

Let’s be clear: this is not some unfair assault on global drug companies. Rather, this is a transition that’s going to give Americans the same opportunity to afford life-saving drugs as other countries are given.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation the U.S. spends far more than any other industrialized country for prescription drugs.

From getting charged $150 more for Xarelto – which reduces the risk of coronary artery disease – to getting ripped off by paying $1,600 for Enbrel, an arthritis drug.

Eliquis, a very common blood-thinner, and one that I have occasionally used myself, prevents blood clots, but costs an extra $514 out-of-pocket for Medicare enrollees in Colorado; in Germany it’s only $96, it’s five times more in the United States.

Why should we pay more than Germans, and Canadians, and the Swiss? What possible rules of common sense should permit drug companies the right to charge us many times more than what the rest of the world pays for the same drugs?

Part of the answer is that up until now, we’ve let them. Medicare, the largest buyer of prescription drugs in the United States, has never been allowed to negotiate the price of drugs with pharmaceutical companies. As Senator Wyden was making painfully clear, the losses to the American people have been substantial.

Until now, Medicare has had to accept whatever price big pharma dictated, even when Medicare knew we were subsidizing the rest of the world.

Well, that changes today. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act we passed last year, Medicare finally has the ability to negotiate with Big Pharma and get us a fair price for these drugs.

Medicare will take the 10 most expensive drugs each year and negotiate their prices down. But the impact goes far beyond the impact just on seniors, or just for those 10 drugs.
First, every year, Medicare will negotiate down 10 more drugs, so the cost will keep coming down each year. In future years, Medicare will be able to negotiate even more drugs.

Second, because Medicare is the largest buyer in the American market, there's a darn good chance that other big buyers, like private insurance companies, are going to negotiate to bring the price that they pay down to what Medicare will pay. A falling tide lowers all prices.

So, what exactly does that mean now? Medicare has announced the first drugs it will negotiate. They include the two I’ve mentioned – Xarelto and Enbrel – along with eight others.

Four of the drugs treat diabetes, the others treat or prevent blood clots, heart failure, kidney disease, blood cancers, and arthritis.

In 2022, Medicare enrollees taking these 10 drugs paid $3.4 billion in out-of-pocket costs. That’s what they paid out of their own savings.

The average per enrollee cost was a staggering $5,247 for the most expensive drug on the list, Imbruvica – which treats blood cancer.

It’s a big deal in every state, it’s a big deal in my home state of Colorado. Over 100,000 Medicare enrollees in Colorado take these 10 drugs.

43,000, including me, take Eliquis, this is a blood-thinner to help prevent blood clots with an average out-of-pocket cost of over $500.

21,000 take Xarelto and pay $447 on average out-of-pocket cost.

The Bottom Line: seniors on Medicare are getting ripped off. And going forward they are finally going to spend less on the prescription drugs that they need, in many cases, just to stay alive.

And if all goes according to plan, the rest of us will also pay less once insurance companies follow Medicare’s lead.

Now this isn't a fix to all of the problems in the health care system in this country. But it's a pretty big step. And it’s a reminder that we’re not helpless to fix the other problems we face that are still out there. All it takes is the will to come together and get things done.

Hopefully, this is just the beginning.”

**VIDEO: Hickenlooper Chairs Senate Hearing on Artificial Intelligence**

Chair Hickenlooper: “The federal government, academia, and the private sector will need to work together to establish thoughtful AI policy.”

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper chaired a hearing of the Senate Commerce Committee’s Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security to explore how to increase transparency in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies for consumers, identify uses of AI that are beneficial or “high-risk,” and evaluate the potential impact of policies designed to increase trustworthiness in the transformational technology.

“It’s obvious that AI is a powerful technology that will revolutionize our economy,” said Hickenlooper, Chair of the Senate Commerce Committee’s Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security, in the hearing. “Just like the first car or personal computer, AI is a transformative technology that has both benefits and risks for consumers... We need to begin to help Americans understand AI’s capabilities and limitations, reduce AI’s potential risks relative to consumers, and increase the public’s trust in AI systems through transparency.”
Hickenlooper was joined by Ranking Member Marsha Blackburn, Chair Maria Cantwell of the Senate Commerce Committee, and witnesses Victoria Espinel, Chief Executive Officer of BSA | The Software Alliance, Dr. Ramayya Krishnan, Dean of the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University, Sam Gregory, Executive Director of WITNESS, and Rob Strayer, Executive Vice President for Policy at the Information Technology Industry Council.

During the hearing, Hickenlooper and other senators asked questions about how companies and the federal government can work together to manage potential risks that arise from AI use, safeguard American privacy, protect the rights of content creators, and ensure AI is transparent for consumers.

“We must also confront the fact that AI can be misused by bad actors. AI can be used to make scams, fraud, and cyberattacks more harmful and more effective,” said Hickenlooper in the hearing. “Companies developing and deploying AI, we believe, have a role to build a safe, secure, and reliable system that over time will earn the trust of the public. Congress will play a role by setting reasonable rules of the road to inform and protect consumers.”

Yesterday, Hickenlooper and U.S. Senator John Thune sent a letter to the White House to develop secure, transparent federal standards for AI. Last week, Hickenlooper and U.S. Senator Thom Tillis sent a letter to the White House to provide updates on efforts to reduce AI's potential threat to the nation's cyber infrastructure. In April, Hickenlooper and Blackburn sent a letter to leading technology associations asking how they will implement the NIST AI Risk Management Framework.

For a full video of the hearing, click HERE. To download high-quality footage of Hickenlooper’s opening remarks, click HERE.

**Hickenlooper, Thune Urge Federal Action on Artificial Intelligence**

*Senators argue for consumer protection*

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senators John Hickenlooper and John Thune sent a letter to the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director Arati Prabhakar urging the White House to develop secure, transparent federal standards for artificial intelligence (AI).

“Given the rapid pace of generative AI development, consumers should be provided with accessible tools to authenticate online content (audio, video, text, image) and feel empowered to trust the AI systems they interact with,” the senators wrote. “We need to invest in research and build consensus around authentication techniques between federal agencies, academia, and industry.”

There are currently no comprehensive federal standards for identifying AI-generated content. In their letter, the senators emphasize the need for close federal and private sector collaboration on research and standards development to ensure future AI innovation is trustworthy and secure.

Specifically, the senators encourage OSTP to continue overseeing research into techniques that could help authenticate online content. They argue that developing open standards will be critical to protecting consumers.

In their letter, the senators pose a number of questions related to AI verification tools:

1. What current or planned federal research or pilot initiatives will focus on advancing content provenance and certifying the authenticity of AI-generated works?
2. What techniques are being explored to prevent watermarks or content authenticity tools from being removed, manipulated, or counterfeited?
3. How will watermarking techniques differ for various types of AI-generated content (e.g. audio, video, text, image)?
Senator Hickenlooper has been a strong advocate for federal coordination on AI policy. Last week, Senator Hickenlooper sent a letter to Acting National Cyber Director Kemba Walden encouraging the White House to consider artificial intelligence's potential threat to the nation's cyber infrastructure.

This Congress, Hickenlooper chairs the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Data Security, which has made research into AI one of its main priorities. Today, Hickenlooper will chair a subcommittee hearing on AI Transparency and consumer trust.

In April, Subcommittee Chair Hickenlooper and Ranking Member Blackburn sent a letter to leading technology companies encouraging the implementation of the AI Risk Management Framework (AI RMF) published by the National Institute for Standards & Technology (NIST). In June, Hickenlooper met with the chair of the Federal Trade Commission to discuss proper guardrails for artificial intelligence.

Read the full letter HERE and below:

Director Prabhakar,

We are in a moment that is both exciting and concerning for consumers interacting with generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology. While this technology can spur innovation and enhance our creativity, there are growing questions about how to protect consumers from fraud, scams, and deception facilitated by generative AI. The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) plays a unique role in coordinating with and building consensus among federal agencies on critical research efforts. We seek to understand the state of federal efforts to develop secure, robust, consensus-based standards for the authentication of AI-generated works in order to promote trust and transparency for Americans.

New generative AI tools are now being used by consumers around the world. ChatGPT and Bard can streamline web searches through the use of AI chatbots, Github Copilot can assist developers in writing code more efficiently, and DALL-E 2 can generate photorealistic images that quickly gain virality. The emergence of generative AI has left consumers concerned about the authenticity of audio and visual content they engage with online. As generative AI technology continues to be integrated into new and existing applications, consumers would benefit from tools that can reliably discern between real and AI-generated content. The White House recently convened seven leading AI companies (Amazon, Anthropic, Google, Inflection, Meta, Microsoft, and OpenAI) which made voluntary commitments to build trustworthy AI technology. Key among these commitments was the development of an AI provenance and watermarking system that would certify the source of and digitally tag AI-generated content. Other industry groups, such as the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA), are also participating in this effort by creating technical standards to verify the origin and history of a piece of digital content, such as an image, video, audio recording, electronic documents or AI-generated content.

Federal agencies also play a critical role in resolving issues related to generative AI. The National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) recently established a new Generative AI Public Working Group to understand the risks of generative AI models. Additional content authenticity and provenance research could be manifested through other means, including through the establishment of a National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource (NAIRR), which would provide additional AI R&D opportunities for researchers across the U.S.

Given the rapid pace of generative AI development, consumers should be provided with accessible tools to authenticate online content (audio, video, text, image) and feel empowered to trust the AI systems they interact with. We need to invest in research and build consensus around authentication techniques between federal agencies, academia, and industry.

As public and private sectors explore ways to promote trustworthy and transparent AI systems, we would like to learn more about OSTP's strategies to support the development of content authenticity tools for the age of generative AI:
1. What current or planned federal research or pilot initiatives will focus on advancing content provenance and certifying the authenticity of AI-generated works?
2. Will such research or pilot initiatives include or consult with representatives from academia, civil society, and the private sector?
3. Will such research or pilot initiatives seek to specifically mitigate against certain types of potential harms to consumers?
4. What techniques are being explored to prevent watermarks or content authenticity tools from being removed, manipulated, or counterfeited?
5. How will watermarking techniques differ for various types of AI-generated content (e.g. audio, video, text, image)?
6. Will watermarking or content provenance systems need to be designed, adapted, or applied in a sector-specific manner (e.g., educators, digital media creators, etc)?
7. How is OSTP coordinating with other federal agencies (i.e., FTC, Dept of Education, and/or NTIA) to implement more consumer education campaigns around content authenticity and digital literacy?

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to continuing to work to ensure novel innovations in AI deliver positive benefits to society while mitigating risks.

Sincerely,

SENATORS BENNET/HICKENLOOPER

Bennet, Hickenlooper, Colleagues Reintroduce Bipartisan Bill to Help Good Samaritans Clean Up Abandoned Hardrock Mines

Washington, D.C. — Colorado U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper joined U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Jim Risch (R-Idaho) to reintroduce the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act. This legislation would make it easier for “Good Samaritans”, such as state agencies, local governments, nonprofits, and other groups, to clean up and improve water quality in and around abandoned hardrock mines.

“Thousands of abandoned mines in Colorado and across the American West threaten our watersheds and pollute our ecosystems,” said Bennet. “This bipartisan legislation will make it easier for our state, local governments, and nonprofits to clean up these mines, help reduce pollution, and improve water quality.

“Abandoned hardrock mines pose alarming risks to our water supplies and soil quality,” said Hickenlooper. “Cutting red tape so good faith actors can clean up these sites is a no-brainer.”

“We have Good Samaritans ready to clean up abandoned mines that are threatening our communities through the land, water, fish, and wildlife they rely on,” said Heinrich. “I’m proud to reintroduce this bipartisan legislation with Senator Risch to create a path for Good Samaritan groups to clean up these sites in New Mexico and across the country.”

“For far too long, we have prevented commonsense environmental improvements from taking place at long-abandoned hardrock mines because we place significant liability risk on the good faith actors who want to clean them up,” said Risch. “I’m proud to introduce legislation with Senator Heinrich to support true Good Samaritans who want to address water quality issues and allow this important work to go forward.”

Thousands of abandoned hardrock mines across the country pose environmental hazards. “Good Samaritan” organizations with no legal or financial responsibility to an abandoned mine want to volunteer to remediate some of these mines, but liability rules would leave these organizations legally responsible for all pre-existing pollution from those mines. The Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act creates a pilot permitting program to enable cleanup to move forward while ensuring these Good Samaritans have the resources to comply with federal oversight. This program is aimed at lower-risk projects that will improve water and soil quality or otherwise protect human health.
Bennet introduced earlier versions of this legislation with colleagues in 2013 and in 2016 following the Gold King Mine spill. In 2019, Bennet introduced the Hardrock Mining Reform Act to modernize our nation’s outdated hardrock mining laws and clean up abandoned mines and reintroduced an updated version with Heinrich and several colleagues.

The text of the bill is available [HERE](#).

**REPRESENTATIVE LAMBORN**

**Chairman Lamborn Touts Strategic Forces Wins in the Fiscal Year 2024 House NDAA**


The event was attended by many leaders within the Strategic Forces community, who also heard from General Thomas A. Bussiere, Commander of the Air Force Global Strike Command, on his recent work on the B21 bomber and the Sentinel program.

During the event Congressman Lamborn delivered the following remarks:

“Good afternoon. Thank you, Rich for the introduction and for organizing this event. It’s great to see so many friendly faces.

“I have the honor of representing one of the most defense-heavy districts in the nation. Colorado Springs hosts many of the military commands and industry partners who are on the front lines of the Strategic Forces enterprise.

“As Chair of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, I’d like to start off by providing a brief reminder of how important deterrence is in today’s world. A few months ago, the United States declared Russia in non-compliance with the New Start Treaty. This is the last in a series of blatant violations of legacy Arms Control instruments. In the Indo-Pacific theatre, China has embarked on an unprecedented buildup of its nuclear capacity and capabilities. Iran continues to pursue breakout capability with respect to their highly enriched uranium. Two weeks ago, North Korea continued to saber rattle by recklessly testing short range ballistic missiles to prove its ability to strike Japan and South Korea.

“These are just a few examples of why we must modernize our nuclear deterrent force, and I am more committed than ever to making this a reality.

“As both chambers begin to conference this year’s National Defense Authorization Act, I want to highlight some critical provisions that demonstrate our commitment to advancing and protecting the nation’s Strategic Forces. First, the House NDAA established the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile (also known as SLCM-N) as a program of record. The Commander in Chief must have more response options, not less, and this capability would bring an extra layer of reassurance to our allies in the Indo-Pacific region. The House NDAA also removes outdated missile defense policy limitations and crucially requires and funds acceleration in our development of hypersonic capabilities. Lastly, the House NDAA fully funds the modernization of the nuclear triad which allows us to maintain a credible and modern deterrent force.

“I would like to take a moment to recognize one of the prominent leaders of that force to provide his insights. General Thomas A. Bussiere is the Commander of the Air Force Global Strike Command, which is responsible for the nation’s three intercontinental ballistic missile wings. It also manages the Air Force’s entire bomber force, to include B-52, B-1 and B-2 wings, and the Air Force Nuclear Command, Control and Communications.
“We appreciate the good work he’s doing at Global Strike Command, especially regarding modernization. The progress with the B21 bomber and the sentinel program are notable, and we urge him to continue this good work.

“With that I will turn it over to General Bussiere to share more details on his work in these areas.”

Background

The Air Force’s Global Strike Command (AFSTRAT-AIR) provides strategic deterrence, global strike, and combat support anytime, anywhere. The command is responsible for the nation’s three intercontinental ballistic missile wings. It also manages the Air Force’s entire bomber force, to include B-52, B-1 and B-2 wings, and the Air Force Nuclear Command, Control and Communications. AFSTRAT-AIR provides secure and effective combat-ready forces for nuclear and conventional global strikes. In September 2017 USSTRATCOM designated AFGSC as Air Forces Strategic - Air (AFSTRAT). AFSTRAT is the USSTRATCOM warfighting air-component.

The Strategic Forces Association brings together government and industry to advance national security solutions in the areas of U.S. Strategic Forces, Nuclear Enterprise, Missile Defense, and Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications.

Congressman Lamborn’s Statement Following Meeting with Balfour Beatty Communities on Fort Carson Housing Issues

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman Doug Lamborn met with Balfour Beatty Communities (BBC) President, Christopher Williams, to discuss the company’s initiatives to address the issues at their Fort Carson properties.

“Today I had a constructive meeting with Christopher Williams, President of Balfour Beatty Communities, to discuss the company’s construction, investment, and recapitalization plans for the family housing serviced by BBC at Fort Carson,” said Congressman Lamborn. “I will continue this dialogue with BBC and monitor its progress on improving the support and quality of life they provide our servicemembers and their families. They have a responsibility to make sure that the quality of life for service members and their families is as high as possible and further progress needs to be made.”

Background

Balfour Beatty Communities conducts development, design/construction, financing, renovation, and property management services for residential and military real estate. It is currently present on 55 military installations in 26 states managing more than 44,000 homes.

Balfour Beatty Communities developed and manages 3,207 homes in the Fort Carson family homes community. More than 900 units were built between 2008-2018, but most of the units at Fort Carson were built between 1958 and 2003. In addition to outdated development, servicemembers and their families face maintenance issues due to industry shortages. In the 2022 U.S. Army Housing Survey, Fort Carson ranked lowest in tenant satisfaction for installations with privatized housing.

Last year, Congressman Lamborn visited Fort Carson to receive an in-depth briefing on the issues facing on base family housing, including plans to address maintenance shortage issues, maintenance logs, current and future construction. He also completed a walk-through of the ongoing demolition at Cherokee West and newly completed neighborhoods.

To watch Congressman Lamborn question the Secretary of the U.S. Army about the Fort Carson housing issues, click here.

Congressman Lamborn Announces Call for U.S. Service Academy Applications for the Class of 2028
Colorado Springs, CO – The office of Congressman Doug Lamborn is now accepting nomination applications to attend a United States Service Academy for the Class of 2028. The application deadline is September 29, 2023, and is open to students and young adults in Colorado’s Fifth Congressional District. The honor of attending a U.S. Service Academy comes with the obligation and commitment to serve in the military upon graduation.

Members of Congress may nominate candidates for appointment to four of the five U.S. Service Academies:

- The U.S. Military Academy (USMA), West Point, NY
- The U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), Annapolis, MD
- The U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), Colorado Springs, CO
- U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), Kings Point, NY

The U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), New London, CT, does not require a congressional nomination for appointment. Individuals seeking a nomination to attend the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy may submit requests to every member of the Colorado Congressional delegation.

For more detailed instructions please visit: services/military-academy-nominations

REPRESENTATIVE PETTERSON

Rep. Pettersen, Colleagues Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Fight Opioid Overdoses in the Workplace

WASHINGTON—U.S. Representatives Brittany Pettersen (CO-07) and Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12) joined their colleagues to introduce bipartisan and bicameral legislation aimed at preventing opioid overdoses and increasing access to overdose reversal medications like naloxone, also known as Narcan. The Workplace Overdose Reversal Kits (WORK) to Save Lives Act will require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to issue guidance to employers regarding opioid overdose reversal medication attainment, usage, and training.

Drug overdose deaths increased by over 30% within the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022 approximately 83,000 opioid-involved drug overdose deaths were reported in the U.S. The National Safety Council found that while 75% of employers reported seeing opioid use impact their workplace, only 17% were able to report being well-prepared to address it.

“Without overdose-reversal drugs like naloxone and people trained in how to use them, my mom wouldn't be alive today,” said Rep. Pettersen. “As the global opioid crisis intensifies, it is crucial that we equip our communities and workplaces with the tools necessary to save lives. I'm proud to join my colleagues in introducing the bipartisan WORK To Save Lives Act, which will give employers and staff the training and resources they need to give people like my mom a second chance.”

“The COVID pandemic in part exposed the depths of an opioid epidemic that has been growing for years. Workplaces across the country are dealing with the fallout from our failure to adequately address this crisis,” said Rep. Watson Coleman. “The WORK To Save Lives Act will finally give workplaces the tools to save workers who are struggling with opioid addiction. Getting these overdose reversal medications - and training in their use - to as many employers as possible has the potential to save countless lives.”

“Across Oregon, I've heard heart-wrenching stories from members of every community who have lost loved ones to opioid overdoses,” said Sen. Merkley, who will be introducing the WORK to Save Lives Act in the Senate. “We have a duty to our family, friends, neighbors, and businesses to help ensure workplaces feel confident to respond to emergencies and utilize overdose reversal medication—saving lives.”

“Naloxone should be an essential part of all emergency medical kits because it saves lives — plain and simple,” said Rep. Trone. “I’ve always been a strong advocate for ensuring Naloxone is easy to obtain because I know that overdoses can happen anywhere and at any time. With opioid overdoses on the rise, workplaces need to be prepared to handle a possible overdose quickly and effectively. It’s just common sense.”
“As the number of opioid-related deaths rise across our nation, I am proud to join my bipartisan colleagues to introduce the WORK to Save Lives Act. Our bill would help equip workplaces with the skills and tools needed to administer lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medication in real time,” said Rep. Rutherford. “While I am also focused on stopping the illicit fentanyl from coming into our country, our commonsense bill would truly save lives.”

“This legislation underscores our commitment to safeguarding American workers and promoting workplace safety,” said Rep. Mace. “By requiring OSHA to provide guidance on obtaining, utilizing, and training for opioid overdose reversal medication, we can empower employers to take proactive steps in preventing opioid overdoses and saving lives. It’s an essential measure that bridges the gap between workplace wellness and compassionate support for individuals facing opioid addiction.”

To prepare workplaces in the event of an opioid overdose, the WORK to Save Lives Act would do the following:

- The Secretary of Labor will, through OSHA, issue nonmandatory guidance to employers on acquiring and maintaining opioid overdose reversal medication and train employees on an annual basis on the usage of such medication.
- The Secretary of Labor will, through OSHA, issue mandatory regulations for federal agencies on acquiring and maintaining opioid overdose reversal medication and train employees on an annual basis on the usage of such medication.

The WORK to Save Lives Act has been endorsed by The National Safety Council, the SAFE Project, and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator.

“Giving someone a second chance at life can be as easy as a quick demonstration and access to a simple tool. In our current world, it is paramount to acknowledge the lifesaving capacity of medications like naloxone,” said Lorraine Martin, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. “Supporting the WORK to Save Lives Act means boldly declaring that America cannot – and will not – continue to ignore this national crisis. Naloxone is first aid when someone is experiencing an opioid overdose and having it available wherever people gather, including workplaces, is imperative. Together, we can empower our nation to save lives, one simple action at a time.”

Naloxone is essential first aid — it belongs wherever people are, including in the workplace,” said Libby Jones, Program Director, Overdose Prevention Initiative at the Global Health Advocacy Incubator. “The Overdose Prevention Initiative is proud to endorse the WORK to Save Lives Act because it will equip employers across the U.S., including the federal government, with the knowledge and ability to save lives from overdose. We thank Representatives Watson Coleman, Rutherford, Trone, Mace, and Pettersen for championing this important cause.”

The WORK to Save Lives Act is also cosponsored by: David Trone (D-MD-06), John Rutherford (R-FL-05), Nancy Mace (R-SC-01), Paul Tonko (D-NY-20), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC-At Large), Doug Lamborn (R-CO-05), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA-29), Sean Casten (D-IL-06), Jasmine Crocket (D-TX-30), Barbara Lee (D-CA-23), Andrea Salinas (D-OR-06), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-07), Andre Carson (D-IN-07), Troy Carter (D-LA-02), and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18).

A companion bill will be introduced in the Senate by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR).

The bill can be read in its entirety here.

Inspired by her own mother’s struggle with a substance use disorder, Pettersen has been leading the fight against the opioid epidemic for a decade in the Colorado state legislature and now in Congress. Since January, she has introduced measures to combat this public health crisis and address everything from the import of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, the financing of drug cartels, expanding access to treatment, and preventing overdose deaths by ensuring airplanes, law enforcement, and hospitals are able to distribute naloxone when necessary.

Reps. Pettersen, Budzinski, and Schrier Introduce Bill to Increase Access to Naloxone
Legislation comes during National Recovery Month, aims to help those at risk of an overdose
WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Representatives Brittany Pettersen (CO-07), Nikki Budzinski (IL-13), and Kim Schrier, M.D. (WA-08) introduced legislation to combat the opioid epidemic, prevent overdose deaths, and limit financial burden on patients. The Hospitals As Naloxone Distribution Sites (HANDS) Act would require Medicare, Medicaid, and TRICARE to cover the cost when medical providers physically hand naloxone to patients who are at risk of an overdose, before they are discharged, at zero cost to the patient.

Pettersen held a press conference to announce the bill at Swedish Medical Center, where her mother received treatment for a substance use disorder. To access downloadable, high quality photos of the event, click here.

"Like far too many Americans, my family was impacted by the opioid epidemic and my mom is only alive today because of overdose-reversal medication like naloxone," said Pettersen. "I was proud to return to Swedish Medical Center – the place that saved my mom's life before she finally got the treatment she needed – to announce the HANDS Act, alongside Dr. Stader. We are working to break down the barriers between life-saving medication and those who need it the most."

"As communities across our country continue to face an overdose crisis, it's critical that our hospitals and emergency rooms are empowered and have the resources necessary to dispense lifesaving mediation proactively to folks who are at risk," said Budzinski. "I'm proud to join Congresswoman Brittany Pettersen to introduce legislation that would improve access to naloxone by ensuring that Medicaid, Medicare and Tricare can cover the cost of this lifesaving medicine when it's distributed preventatively to folks struggling with addiction."

"The opioid epidemic, and the impact of fentanyl on our communities, is a historic public health crisis that has impacted every part of our nation. As a mother, a pediatrician, and a congresswoman I am concerned and know this issue needs to be addressed from every angle, and that includes at the federal level," said Schrier. "This bill will also allow for patients to acquire naloxone from Emergency Departments nationwide, closing the barriers of cost and access for this life-saving medication for patient populations that need it most."

"I want to thank Rep. Pettersen for her leadership and vision in introducing the HANDS Bill. As an emergency and addiction medicine physician, I cannot overstate how urgent the need is to address the opioid crisis and find systematic solutions to the problems our patients are facing," said Don Stader, MD, FACEP, Executive Director of the Naloxone Project. "The HANDS Bill will empower the medical system to better care for patients at risk of overdose, and create a system where every one of America's over 6,000 emergency departments can dispense naloxone. It will make care more equitable, more effective and will save lives."

"Improving access to naloxone saves lives and gives patients who have overdosed a new opportunity to continue on their path to recovery," said Christopher S. Kang, MD, FACEP, president of ACEP. "Eliminating barriers to this life-saving drug is a critical part of our efforts to combat the growing opioid and substance use disorder crisis. ACEP is grateful for Rep. Pettersen's leadership on this important legislation."

"The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) strongly supports broadened accessibility to safe and effective opioid overdose reversal medications for people who use opioids or unregulated drugs and other individuals in a position to initiate early response to evidence of opioid overdose," said Brian Hurley, MD, MBA, FAPA, DFASAM, president of ASAM. "ASAM applauds the introduction of the HANDS Act, which will provide no-cost Medicaid, Medicare, and Tricare coverage for the preventive distribution of opioid overdose reversal drugs for patients at risk for an opioid overdose as they leave hospitals, emergency departments, and surgical centers across the country."

Click here for the full text of the bill.

Inspired by her own mother's struggle with a substance use disorder, Pettersen has been leading the fight against the opioid epidemic for a decade in the Colorado state legislature and now in Congress. Since January, she has introduced measures to combat this public health crisis and address everything from the import of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, the financing of drug cartels, expanding access to treatment, and preventing overdose deaths.
by ensuring airplanes, law enforcement, and—with the HANDS Act—hospitals are able to distribute naloxone when necessary.
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Second Vice Chair: El Paso County Commissioner Holly Williams
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Treasurer: Teller County Commissioner Erik Stone

Legislative Initiatives
Attainable senior housing

Protect a regional quality of life through wildfire risk mitigation and sustained air and water quality

Allow public sector retirees to fill workforce shortages in local government, without pension or retirement penalties

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Manitou Springs, Victor, Woodland Park
Alma, Calhan, Fairplay, Green Mountain Falls,
Monument, Palmer Lake, Ramah

Legislative Themes
2024

DRAFT
Support local control.

Support legislation addressing redundant or unnecessary regulation.

Overarching Themes

Support & Enhance Transportation Throughout the Region
- Support legislation that offsets the costs of new air quality regulation requirements.
- Support efforts to improve safety and reliability in all transportation modes; drivers, transit riders, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Support efforts to improve safe and reliable flow of people and goods through voluntary participation in congestion management programs.
- Oppose reducing transportation funding to the region.
- Oppose mandates relating to Employee Trip Reduction and/or Vehicle Miles Traveled.

Support Air & Water Quality
- Support legislation that protects the air and water quality of the Pikes Peak Region.
- Oppose creation of undue regulatory burdens on small communities.
- Support funding and opportunities for wildfire mitigation work.

Maximize Quality of Life through Local Control
- Local government is in the best position to determine local needs to attain high quality of life and the funding for those needs.
- Oppose and remove state mandates that usurp local control. For any existing or new mandates, provide funding and support to local governments for implementation.
- Support efforts that maintain the lead role of local government to address affordable housing.
- Support reform to construction defect legislation to encourage new condominium builds.
- Support addressing regional issues as they pertain to the PPACG mission.

Support & Protect Our Military Partners
- Support legislation providing additional assistance to military veterans, families and active duty members.
- Support legislation that addresses encroachment issues around our military installations.
- Support efforts to attract and expand military operations in Colorado and oppose legislation that reduces the attractiveness of Colorado as a military resource.

Protect & Enhance Services for Seniors in the Region
- Support legislation that expands federal, state, regional or local revenues available to fund the needs of seniors.
- Support increased funding for transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities.
- Support increases in the quality of care and consumer protections for older adults and their caregivers.
- Support attainable housing efforts for older adults through assistance such as adjusting the homestead tax exemption program for relocating within the state.