



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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The Significance of Change, Momentum and Opportunity

Senator Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senate

Shelley Moore Capito was elected to the United States Senate in 2014. She is the first female U.S. Senator in West Virginia's history.

Senator Capito served West Virginia's Second Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for 14 years, and as a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates for four years.

Today, Senator Capito serves on the Appropriations Committee, the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, the Rules and Administration Committee, and the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. She serves as chairman of the Appropriations Committee's Legislative Branch Subcommittee and the EPW Committee's Clean Air and Nuclear Safety Subcommittee.

A lifelong West Virginian, Senator Capito was born in Glen Dale in the northern panhandle. She holds a bachelor's degree in zoology from Duke University and a master of education degree from the University of Virginia.

Last year marked a significant change in the trajectory of West Virginia's economy. After years of economic decline and job loss driven by overzealous and misguided federal regulations, 2017 saw total employment increase, strong state gross domestic product growth and a renewed optimism that our state's best days are on the horizon.

We've begun 2018 with significant momentum after passage of historic tax reform that the president signed into law at the end of last year. This comprehensive reform will have a meaningful impact on West Virginians across the Mountain State. The standard deduction is nearly doubling to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for married couples, simplifying the tax filing process for many West Virginians. The child tax credit is expanding to provide relief for working families. And individuals at every income level will benefit from lower tax rates. For businesses, this reform provides significant benefits to employers, resulting in increased salaries, bonuses and capital investment. As a result of these reforms, more money will stay in West Virginia and help contribute to the prosperity of our communities. I am proud to have supported this legislation, and I am thrilled that Congress had a willing partner in the White House.

Another positive development in the last year has been a return to sensible regulation from federal agencies. For too long, Washington

regulations stifled our state's energy sector. But in the last year, I've worked with the Trump administration to roll back overly burdensome regulations that discourage investment and inhibit growth. The return to practical federal policy is already eliciting positive developments in our energy industry, and engendering opportunities that we can, and must, build upon.

One such opportunity is the Appalachian Storage Hub, a massive infrastructure project that will transform the Appalachian region into an epicenter of economic growth and prosperity. The idea is simple: unprecedented growth in natural gas production has resulted in the proliferation of valuable natural gas liquids, such as ethane; however, a lack of storage and distribution infrastructure means these products are underutilized and their potential contribution to growth in downstream industries goes unrealized.

Establishing a storage hub in West Virginia – strategically located on the Marcellus, Utica and Rogersville shales – will end this wastefulness and incentivize the development of a regional market for these byproducts. The American Chemistry Council estimates that the Appalachian Storage Hub could result in the creation of 100,000 jobs and \$36 billion of private investment in the region. I will continue to champion legislation to encourage the development of this project and work with U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to see that it becomes a reality.





Senator Shelley Moore Capito addresses the Senate Broadband Caucus in February of 2017

In addition to energy infrastructure, we must increase broadband deployment across the state, ensuring that West Virginia businesses and residents have access to true high-speed connectivity. Broadband is essential as we transition to a 21st century global economy where nearly every aspect is contingent upon access to fast, reliable internet service. One of my top priorities as a senator has been closing the digital divide that is plaguing many rural communities. In 2015, I began my Capito Connect Plan, an effort to spur a conversation about the importance of broadband access and provide a roadmap to investing in this indispensable infrastructure.

Since then, I have sponsored several pieces of legislation, such as the *Gigabit Opportunity (GO) Act*, to encourage deployment of rural broadband. Through these efforts, and those of state and local leaders, we are seeing substantial successes, like the recent \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expand access in Barbour, Randolph and Upshur Counties. There is more work to be done, and I stand ready to work with

state and local leaders to ensure that all West Virginians have access to high-speed broadband.

These significant successes have provided great momentum for our state's economy as we begin the new year. However, if we are going to truly realize our potential for prosperity, we must work together. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to partner with state and local leaders to ensure that they have the federal resources necessary to succeed. Since 2015, we have seen significant investment from federal partners like the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Economic Development Administration. These investments will aid in the development of critical infrastructure, efforts to support entrepreneurship and workforce development.

I know that West Virginia's best days are ahead. Despite the challenges we face, we are blessed with a state of unsurpassed beauty, untapped potential and an unwavering spirit. Local, state and federal

leaders, together with our partners in the private sector, must push for innovative solutions that spur developments in current and future industries. I will continue to do my part. Let's get to work! ▽