

\$12,000 of it just for access to see a doctor because her insurance company didn't help with that.

One final story I would like to share is from Rob, a small business owner in St. Joseph who pays half of his employees' medical, and his costs keep going up. His agent walks in every year, he told me, and says: Well, this year it went up 9 percent.

He said: That might have been acceptable, except it also went up 9 percent last year and 11 percent the year before that, and it was 9 percent the year before that.

Many of the losses in the individual market are being shifted to try to make the insurance market make up for what is happening on the individual side.

Year over year, we see premium increases, skyrocketing deductibles, and higher out-of-pocket costs. That is the status quo under what we have now, and it is unacceptable. That is why Republicans have made clear that we are going to move forward to solutions that will address some of the major issues in our healthcare system and look for ways to bring down costs and expand access to quality, affordable coverage, but more importantly, quality, affordable care.

I urge my colleagues to work with us and join in this effort to help us find solutions to be sure we don't leave people out who shouldn't be left out but that we also make access to healthcare more possible for more families and more individuals than it is today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, Republicans have been warning for years now about the grave damage ObamaCare has done to the American healthcare system. We have pointed out how the healthcare law's regulations are destabilizing the health insurance industry. We have warned that the ObamaCare markets are unstable. We have talked about the death spiral which has already doomed ObamaCare.

It seems like every day we get more proof that the collapse is well underway. Last week, the insurance company Aetna announced it was exiting the individual ObamaCare markets entirely. CNN did a story about this last Wednesday. The headlines said: "Aetna to ObamaCare: We're Outta Here." It is interesting because Aetna as a company was one of the cheerleaders for ObamaCare early on; they jumped in and said: We are very involved. We want to make this work. Here they are pulling out, saying it has failed.

Humana had already said it was quitting the exchanges, not just one place but everywhere.

In the past month or so, we have seen big companies drop out of the markets in Virginia and in Iowa. There is now just one company left selling in the exchanges for Nebraska and for Delaware. There is just one company selling in Alaska, in Missouri, in Alabama, in Oklahoma, in South Carolina, and in my home State of Wyoming.

For people living in all of these States, there is a monopoly for whom they get to buy their insurance from under the ObamaCare markets. That is not a marketplace, it is a monopoly.

The Associated Press looked at all of these companies dropping out. It now found that 40 percent of America—4 out of 10 counties in America—will have just 1 company selling insurance in the ObamaCare exchanges for next year; 4 out of every 10 counties in America. That is what you get with an ObamaCare exchange.

How is that supposed to bring down prices? Other companies have been saying how much they will need to charge if they are going to stick around for 1 more year under ObamaCare. It looks like we will have another year of incredible price increases. In Maryland, insurance companies are demanding average premium increases of anywhere between 18 and 59 percent. In Connecticut, they are asking for 15 to 33 percent more next year.

Democrats are desperate to blame the collapse of ObamaCare on President Trump. My question to the Democrats is this, What about all of the companies that dropped out of the marketplaces last year? What about the double-digit price increases Americans were paying year after year under ObamaCare?

The premium for the average benchmark plan in the exchanges went up 25 percent at the start of this year. Are Democrats going to try to blame that on someone else?

In March, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported the results of a poll on healthcare in America. In this poll, 4 out of 10 American adults with insurance under ObamaCare said they have trouble affording their deductible. They have ObamaCare insurance, but 4 out of 10 adults in America with ObamaCare insurance are having trouble affording their deductibles. Three out of every ten with insurance under ObamaCare said they have problems paying their medical bills. One in four Americans with insurance under ObamaCare said the costs have forced them to put off healthcare they needed or skip it entirely.

These people are suffering because of President Obama and the Democrats and what they passed. These Americans are struggling because of the flawed policies and regulations of the ObamaCare law that Democrats in Washington wrote.

Republicans are saying what we have said all along: Healthcare reform should be about helping people get the care they need, from a doctor they choose, at a lower cost. We need to do

something to rescue the people who are being crushed under this collapsing ObamaCare system. That is why Republicans are the ones talking about solving the problems that have been caused by ObamaCare. The House of Representatives passed a bill that includes some important things that could help stabilize the markets. It includes things to stop these double-digit premium hikes that have been occurring every year.

In the Senate, we have already started mapping out the ideas. We are going to continue offering our ideas. We are going to continue debating them. I want to invite Democrats in the Senate to come to the floor and offer their ideas as well. It doesn't have to be a partisan fight. It shouldn't be a partisan fight that drags on for months and months. We need to find solutions for the American people who are suffering under President Obama's healthcare law.

For all the Democrats who are now trying to redirect the blame away from themselves, the problems they caused, trying to pass the buck, we are trying to pass a bill. I can tell from listening at home in Wyoming, where I will be again this weekend and was last weekend, people know who caused the problems of ObamaCare. The American people are looking for solutions. They don't care who offers it. They want solutions. I think if we can get a bipartisan solution, all the better. I invite the Democrats to come to the floor to give us their best ideas.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

WELCOMING BACK THE SENATOR FROM NORTH CAROLINA

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, before I move into my remarks, I would like to say welcome back to the Senator from North Carolina. We are happy to see him hale and hardy.

I was worried until I saw your little internet video and you looked fine. It is nice to see you. We welcome you back to the Senate floor—and looking more energetic than the rest of us, in any case. So happy to have you back, Senator TILLIS.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. President, in the rubble of this week, the Federal Communications Commission is going to formally start the process of destroying net neutrality. A free and open internet is without question important to democracy and American innovation.

Apparently this FCC believes we no longer need the protections that keep internet service providers from discriminating against websites and online content, but these protections are

what make the internet what it is today. They mandate, very simply, that ISPs have to treat websites the same, whether they are Twitter or Facebook, Breitbart or the New York Times. The FCC is supposed to be there to make sure ISPs follow this basic principle: Treat all content the same. But under this administration, these protections are being undermined.

It starts tomorrow when they will vote to begin the process to repeal net neutrality. I really don't know why the FCC thinks this is a good idea, because the internet is not broken. What problem were you trying to solve by getting rid of these protections, and on whose behalf are you working? There is not a single constituent in my State with whom I ever interacted—and I bet this is true for many other Members of the Senate and House—who says: You know those net neutrality protections? I hate them. You have to get rid of that net neutrality thing. It is bugging me and harming my access to the internet. I would like fast lanes and slow lanes. I would like my ISP to determine what I get to see and how quickly I get to see it.

There is literally no constituency for what is happening tomorrow, but there is one group that stands to gain here, and that is the ISPs, the companies that control your access to the internet. It is true that they are promising to keep the internet open and free. In fact, they did it just this week. A group of ISPs published a full page ad in the print version of the Washington Post reaffirming their commitment to voluntary net neutrality. In other words, they promised to be good to all of us as consumers. They are basically saying: You don't need the Federal Communications Commission to enforce any rule or law related to a free and open internet. We will do it voluntarily.

But here is the thing: Without net neutrality as a matter of rule and law, there is nothing that prevents them from treating content or websites differently. In fact, they will have financial incentives to do just that because making profits is their obligation. They have to maximize their profits. They have a fiduciary obligation to maximize profits. If there is an opportunity now or in the future to change the business model for internet service, changing the internet as we know it along the way, they are duty bound to pursue it. They do not have an obligation—a moral one or a statutory one or a legal one—to a free and open internet; they have an obligation to their shareholders and profits.

Here is what is going to happen if the FCC succeeds ending net neutrality once and for all: ISPs would be allowed to split content into two lanes—favorite content would be in the fast lane and everything else in the slow lane. Companies that need their content to be fast for video streaming or cloud services would have to pay to be in the fast lane. At the end of the day, the cost is going to be transferred to you, the consumer.

We would pay more for the same internet, but the issue here is bigger than a company that streams video asking an ISP to stream their content faster in exchange for more money. It is not just that. This is an era, as we all know, of corporate consolidation. The content companies and the ISPs are often one and the same. So it is not just that you would get Netflix negotiating with Comcast and maybe paying extra so they can stream their content so you can view it; it is also what happens when Comcast or some other company is also the content company.

I want everybody to think this through. If you were running a company that provided access to the internet and also owned content, wouldn't you be at least a little bit tempted—wouldn't your board of directors at least make you look at the possibility that if you have television shows and if you have websites and you depend on traffic, why in the world wouldn't you prioritize your own stuff? It is not apocryphal. It is not apocalyptic to imagine that a company would say: We are a vertical now, and we own content. Why are we going to put up our competitor's stuff at the same rates? The law doesn't provide for that anymore. Net neutrality is a thing of the past.

You don't have to imagine that these are bad people who are running these companies; you just have to imagine that they are businesspeople and that they run publicly traded companies that have to give quarterly earnings reports and have to show profit every single quarter. What better way to make profit than to create what they call on the internet a walled garden?

Everything seems like the internet you used to have, except it is all within one family of companies, and that is what net neutrality is designed to prevent. When you get on the internet, your ISPs can't tell you whether to go to Google or Bing or Yahoo or Facebook or Breitbart or the New York Times or the Honolulu Star-Advertiser or wherever it wants; you get it all at the same speed. That is what net neutrality is all about. But to the degree and extent that net neutrality protections are repealed as a matter of law, these companies can suddenly provide you with opportunities to see all their stuff and only their stuff. You will still have access to the other stuff. It might not stream very well or load very fast. That is what net neutrality is all about.

Entrepreneurs and small business owners will also be hurt. Think about what it takes to start and grow a business. You don't have extra cash to hand over to your ISPs to make sure people can access your content. Without net neutrality, new services, new websites, new big ideas will have a harder time competing with established businesses. That is why more than 1,000 entrepreneurs, investors, and startups from every single State have signed a letter asking that the FCC protect net neu-

trality—because it is critical for innovation.

When you think about how quickly the internet of things is gaining steam, it is also a big deal for what they call IoT. We are at a historic moment in innovation in the digital space.

Kevin Kelly, internet pioneer, recently did an interview with Stephen Dubner of Freakonomics Radio. They talked about the fact that in 2015 alone, 5 quintillion transistors were added to devices that were not computers. A quintillion is a billion billion. That is such an enormous number, it is hard to fathom. That is how fast the internet of things is growing. That is the level of innovation that is taking place, but this innovation depends on a free and open internet.

So the degree and extent that individual ISPs are able to control who gets what and at what speed, all of that innovation at the app level, the IoT level, all the cool stuff you are looking forward to from Silicon Valley or wherever it may be, is in danger because then it becomes about paying tolls. Then it becomes about a commercial negotiation. Then it becomes about lawyering up. You have a really good idea? Lawyer up. You have a really good idea? Get people who have a master's in business administration. Forget the engineers. Forget the content developers. Forget the creative class. What you have to do is figure out how to get in on what will essentially be what they call a closed shop. And that is what net neutrality is all about.

What if your internet service provider has a relationship with one of these websites? What if an auto sales website is purchased by a media company or vice versa? If you try to purchase a car online, you may end up in an internet funhouse if the FCC takes away net neutrality. It will look like the internet, but you may not have complete access to all the options. The same idea applies to the internet of things. If every car connects to the internet, broadband providers could decide that it takes too much bandwidth and pick and choose which brands are allowed to connect to the internet. That is what can happen without net neutrality.

They could offer a basic internet package that limits customers to certain websites or content, sort of how you buy basic cable and then decide whether you want ESPN or HBO or whatever additional channels. It is not totally out of the question that that could be the way you access the internet in the future.

The thing is, it sounds so scary, it sounds so crazy that you can't imagine it would happen. And it is true that it didn't happen in the past, but that is because it wasn't in their commercial interest to do it. Think about towns where there are one or two ISPs. Think about a future 5 or 10 years from now when net neutrality is repealed. The moment it is in their commercial interest to do something to change the

very nature of the internet is the moment they will be duty bound to consider going forward.

When net neutrality was adopted under the previous FCC, there were 3.8 million people who provided comment. This is a very unique process. When the law passed that allowed ISPs to sell your commercial data, to sell your browsing data to third parties—that happened in a 30-hour period—basically, nobody noticed. We tried to mobilize. We got the word out. They had the votes, and it happened very quickly. This is different. Under the law, there is a public comment period. There were 3.8 million people who commented on the last net neutrality debate. There are already 1 million people who have commented through the FCC's website.

Tomorrow, the FCC will take an action that will open up the comment period and provide people an opportunity to weigh in on this. I would just offer that I do not believe there is any real constituency for what the FCC is doing. I think people across the country—young and old; left, right, and center; Democratic and Republican; urban and rural—everybody who cares about a free and open internet ought to care about what is happening tomorrow.

With that, I would like to yield to a Member of the Senate who has many years of leadership in this space, someone who has authored some of the statutory architecture that has allowed this innovation on the internet to occur, someone who fights for consumers, the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. MARKEY.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I say to Senator SCHATZ, thank you for organizing our Senate net neutrality champions out here on the floor today so that we can all stand up and add our voices to your voice in speaking on this critical issue. Now, there are people watching the Senate floor right now by watching the live stream on c-span.org or on Facebook Live.

They might be engaged citizens, they might be political junkies, or maybe they need something to help them to ensure that their newborn is going to go to sleep this afternoon. That is watching C-SPAN. That helps the family. Let's face it. The action in this most deliberative body can sometimes feel a little slow.

Now, imagine just a few companies deciding that c-span.org will be put in a slow lane, that the public interest content streamed out to the world from this Chamber will be sent out at an even more deliberative pace, all while kitten videos get priority in an internet fast lane.

When people talk about net neutrality, that is what we are talking about. Instead of an open and free internet where the billions of clicks, likes, and links made by customer and entrepreneurs in their living rooms and

offices determines who wins and loses, it will be just a few companies in a few corporate boardrooms deciding who gets into the express lane and who falls behind in an internet traffic jam.

That is why we need a true open internet. That is exactly what I heard last month when I hosted a roundtable in Boston with a number of our tech firms—Carbonite, TripAdvisor, Wayfair, iRobot, and others. Their message was clear: Net neutrality impacts businesses across the entire internet ecosystem, and the ever-changing environment of entrepreneurship can be easily disrupted without this ingredient—net neutrality.

Today, essentially every company is an internet company. Consider these statistics. In 2016, almost one-half of the venture capital funds invested in this country went toward internet-specific and software companies. That is \$25 billion worth of investment.

At the same time, to meet America's insatiable demand for broadband internet, U.S. broadband and telecommunications industry giants invested more than \$87 billion in capital expenditures in 2015. That is the highest rate of annual investment in the last 10 years. So we have hit a sweet spot. Investment in broadband and wireless technology is high, job creation is high, and venture capital investment in online startups is high. Disrupting that formula now would only create chaos and uncertainty.

With strong net neutrality protections in place, there is no problem that needs to be fixed. But the Trump administration wants to upend this hallmark of American innovation and democratization by gutting net neutrality rules. Tomorrow, Chairman Ajit Pai and the Republican-controlled Federal Communications Commission will vote to begin a proceeding that will allow a few powerful broadband providers to control the internet.

Now, the big broadband barons and their Republican allies say: We don't need net neutrality. They say: What we really need is a "light touch" regulatory framework for broadband.

But let's be clear here. When the broadband behemoths say "light touch" what they really mean is "hands off". They really want hands off of their ability to choose online winners and losers.

That is what they really want, to allow AT&T, Verizon, Charter, Comcast, and all of the other internet service providers to set up internet fast lanes for those with the deepest pockets, pushing those who can't onto a slow gravel path. Then, they will just pass any extra costs onto the consumer. What they really want is to sideline the FCC, our telecommunications cop on the beat, and to create an unregulated online ecosystem where broadband providers can stifle the development of competing services that cannot afford an internet E-ZPass.

No one should have to ask permission to innovate. But with fast and slow

lanes, that is precisely what an entrepreneur will need to do. Right now, the essence of the internet is to innovate and test new ideas first, and if an idea then takes off, the creator can attract capital and expand.

Creating internet fast and slow lanes would flip this process on its head. Instead, an entrepreneur would first need to raise capital in order to start innovating, because she would need to pay for fast lane access to have a chance for her product to be seen and to succeed. Only those with access to deep pockets would develop anything new. Imagine the stifling of creativity if startups need massive amounts of money even to innovate.

Now, Chairman Pai says he likes net neutrality. But in reality, his proposal would eliminate the very order that established today's network neutrality rules. That is like saying you value democracy but you don't see a need for a constitution. It makes no sense.

For Chairman Pai and the ISPs, title II is a bad word. It is some terrible thing. But for everyone else—consumers, activists, and entrepreneurs—title II is a reason to celebrate. Back in 2010, the FCC attempted to put net neutrality rules in place without reclassifying under title II of the Communications Act. The DC Circuit Court invalidated those rules. Then, in 2015, the Federal Communications Commission rightfully adopted the open internet order, which reclassified broadband under title II, and the DC Circuit upheld the rule in 2016.

The issue is settled. The FCC should not repeat past mistakes and instead should maintain the successful current regime. Why is title II appropriate? It was Congress's intent to preserve the FCC's authority to forestall threats to competition and innovation in telecommunications services, even as the technologies used to offer those services evolved over time.

Now, classifying broadband under title II is just a very fancy way of saying broadband is like telephone service. It is a basic utility that Americans rely on every day to work, to communicate, and to connect. Broadband has become the single most important telecommunications service Americans use to transmit information from one to another. This is common sense to Americans around the country, with the only exception being high-powered telecommunications lobbyists inside the beltway here in Washington.

Chairman Pai also claims that he wants internet service providers to voluntarily decide to follow net neutrality principles. That is like asking a kid to voluntarily swear not to stick his hand in the cookie jar. It just won't happen. We know the broadband industry—your cable, wireless or telecommunications provider—can't self-regulate themselves. They struggle to even show up on time to install or fix your service. Do we really trust them to resist using their internet gatekeeper role and putting their online competitors at an unfair disadvantage?

This effort on net neutrality is just one piece of the Republicans' effort to dismantle the basic protections safeguarding American families. Instead of protecting our privacy, our healthcare, our environment, or our net neutrality, the Republicans want to give it all away to their friends and allies and big corporations.

The FCC has received more than 1 million comments already, and I am sure millions more will flow in the weeks and months to come, as the FCC comment period will stretch until at least August. Those are comments from every corner of the country and from every walk of life. They are standing up to say we need a truly open and free Internet.

Openness is the internet's heart. Nondiscrimination is its soul. Any infringement on either of those features undermines the spirit and intent of net neutrality.

So I proudly stand with my fellow netizens out on the Senate floor and all across America who oppose any efforts to undermine net neutrality. We are on the right side of history. I am ready for the historic fight to come.

Twelve years ago, I introduced the first net neutrality bill in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, the first net neutrality bill was introduced by the Senator from Oregon, RON WYDEN. This has been a long battle, a long struggle coming. We now have America in its sweep spot, with net neutrality on the books for software and broadband companies, which allows for a fair balance in terms of the competition in the marketplace.

So I now turn and yield for the Senator from Oregon, RON WYDEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Massachusetts for not just today but all of the years in which he has led this battle. He is right. We have served together now in both Chambers and, in fact, when I was here and he was in the other body, we talked often about why this was such a bedrock principle.

You know, sometimes you listen to the head of the FCC and you get the sense that somehow he is saying that the internet either is broken or is about to break—that some horrendous set of problems are going to ensue without his ill-advised ideas. The fact is that the internet is not broken. The Federal Communications Commission is not trying to help consumers by rolling back net neutrality protections. They are doing it to make it easier for the big cable companies to be in a position to shove out true and real competition. That, I would say to my friend Senator MARKEY and my friend from Hawaii, Senator SCHATZ, who has been championing these efforts in the Commerce Committee, is what this is really all about.

You know, the reality is that the internet is now the shipping lane for the 21st century. It is that place—a

global marketplace—where you have the free exchange of ideas, and today's rules protect that shipping lane of the 21st century—the freedom for Americans and people worldwide to compete online. It exists so that the powerful interests, those who have the deepest pockets, do not go out and swallow the little guys up every single time.

Now, as we talk about net neutrality and why it is so essential for jobs, free speech, political engagement, education, economic opportunity, and better competition, there are really just three points. First, protecting the free and open internet under Title II of the Telecommunications Act, in my view, is the best way to proceed at this point. It is the only way, at present, to ensure a free and open internet, and that is, by rejecting this idea that somehow the internet is broken and we should upend the current rules. The Federal Communications Commission should not only leave the current net neutrality rules in place, they ought to aggressively move against companies that violate those rules. As my friends from Massachusetts and Hawaii know, there is not exactly a lot of evidence that the Federal Communications Commission is doing that either.

Net neutrality, in short, protects the internet's ability to give a fair shake to every single person in America and literally in the world with a good idea—they don't have to have money. They don't have to have lobbyists. They don't have to have PACs. All they have to have with net neutrality and the internet is an idea to compete with the establishment. This level playing field is a prerequisite for protecting free speech.

A level regulatory playing field means that these powerful interests—the cable companies, specifically—can't pick winners and losers because of their political or personal views. Our colleague, Senator FRANKEN of Minnesota, has correctly said that net neutrality is the First Amendment issue of our time, and I think he is spot-on on that matter.

Finally, because there really hasn't been the competition in the broadband marketplace that would best serve the consumer and the public, what you should definitely do is operate under the theory that you need strong rules. We all know that too many people don't have a choice when it comes to a broadband provider; often it comes down to Comcast or nothing. Without real competition, America needs strong net neutrality rules to prevent Comcast or AT&T from basically tossing consumer choice and free speech in the trash can to rake in even more profits.

A lack of broadband competition and consumer choice is clearly a problem you cannot solve by giving the big cable companies more freedom—freedom to run at will through the marketplace.

So the question now is—and I think my friend from Massachusetts just

touched on it—what happens now? What happens now is making the American people aware that this is the time for their voices to be heard.

The fact is, there are two notions of political change in America. Some people think it starts in Washington, DC, and in government buildings in various capitals and then trickles down to the grassroots.

Senator SCHATZ, Senator MARKEY, and I take a different view with respect to how you bring about political change in America. It is not top-down; it is bottom-up. It is bottom-up as Americans from all walks of life weigh in with their legislators, weigh in with the Federal Communications Commission. My guess is that pretty soon—probably tomorrow—the future of the internet is going to be in the hands of the Federal Communications Commission.

I just want to wrap up my remarks by talking about how important it is for the American people to go online to the Federal Communications Commission website and file a comment, and visit my website—wyden.senate.gov—where you can get more information.

I will close with this: I think my friends—certainly Senator MARKEY and Senator SCHATZ—may have heard this. I want to talk about the fight against internet piracy because we are all against internet piracy. No one is in favor of that kind of thievery, but we didn't think it made sense to damage the architecture of the internet—the domain name systems and the fundamental principles by which the internet operates—in the name of fighting piracy.

When there was a bill with a shortsighted view—it was called SOPA and PIPA—and it was introduced, scores and scores of Senators supported it immediately. I put a hold on this bill. I put a public hold on the bill. I chaired a little subcommittee of the Senate Finance Committee. There were close to a majority of Senators already in support of this flawed bill. We began to talk to those around the country who understand what it really means if you damage the internet and its architecture for a shortsighted and, in this case, unworkable approach.

Everybody thought we didn't have a chance of winning. There was very close to a majority in the Senate actually cosponsoring it. So a vote was scheduled on whether to lift my hold on this bill, the flawed PIPA and SOPA bill.

Four days before the vote was to take place on whether to lift my hold, 15 million Americans emailed, texted, called, went to community meetings. They went out all across the country. Mind you, these 15 million Americans were focused and spent more time online in a week than they did thinking about their U.S. Senator in a couple of years.

They said this defies common sense. We are not for internet piracy, but don't destroy the internet.

My hope is, once again, with the odds stacked against our side—the odds stacked against Senator SCHATZ, Senator MARKEY, and all the Senators who have been willing, on our side, to speak up against these powerful interests that really would like to gut net neutrality—that those who understand what the freedom of the net is all about, what it means to have this ability to communicate that is so vital to people without clout and power, will take the fight for the consumer, for the man and woman who just want a fair shake when they get an idea. My hope is, just as they did a few years ago in blocking this ill-advised SOPA and PIPA bill, that those who care so much about freedom and a fair shot for everybody will, once again, take the fight to the Federal Communications Commission, knowing that their voices can make a difference. They have made a difference in the past.

It is a real pleasure to be with Senator MARKEY and Senator SCHATZ.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, will the Senator from Oregon yield?

Mr. WYDEN. I yield.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, as the Senator from Oregon remembers so well, when he and I started in Congress, there was one telephone company.

Did we have innovation? Well, we had a company winning Nobel Prizes in basic research. Did we see applied research out there, new technologies? No. We saw a black rotary dial phone. So AT&T had to get broken up so there would be new companies, new competition, new technologies.

Ultimately, because of all of that effort toward deregulation to let more companies in, more innovations, we now have devices that we walk around with, which are just minicomputers in our pocket. We have millions of apps that people sitting in any city and town all across our country can develop and get online to try to make a few bucks.

Ultimately, it is still that old AT&T mentality: How do we shut it down? How do we close it down? How do we make it hard for the entrepreneur, hard for the innovator, hard for that new idea to get out there that makes it more productive, easier for the American people to be able to have access to these new programs?

I agree with the Senator from Oregon that this is a pivotal time in our country's entrepreneurial history. We have learned this lesson over and over again. The Senator has been a great leader on these issues, and I just want to compliment him on that. I compliment the Senator from Hawaii for his leadership on the issue.

I yield back the remainder of my time to the Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Massachusetts. In fact, I have to leave the floor right now to wrap up business for a very important Finance Committee meeting tomorrow. It is a markup where we are going to be

looking at ways as part of the transformation of Medicare—what I call updating the Medicare guarantee—that some of the technologies my friend from Massachusetts talked about are going to be available to seniors.

I know our friend from New Hampshire has arrived, and she has been a very strong advocate of principles of net neutrality.

I yield the remainder of my time to her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I thank my friends from Oregon, Massachusetts, and Hawaii for their leadership on this very important issue concerning net neutrality.

Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to the Federal Communications Commission's proposal to undermine critical net neutrality rules, which would change the internet as we know it today.

Tomorrow the FCC will vote on a notice of proposed rulemaking, which begins the unraveling of commonsense consumer protections that enhance our online experience. Net neutrality is a concept that requires internet service providers to provide equal access to online applications and content. It prevents internet service providers from discriminating against content and content providers, discrimination that can take the form of making certain web pages, certain applications, or videos load faster or load slower than others.

Net neutrality is integral to promoting innovation, supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses, and encouraging economic growth in my home State of New Hampshire and across the entire Nation.

In March, Washington Republicans, with the support of the Trump administration, voted to take away critical online privacy protections giving ISPs the green light to collect and use a consumer's online data without the consumer's consent. So it is no surprise that what corporate ISPs want next is to remove baseline protections that allow even the softest voice to be heard or the smallest of businesses to thrive against larger competitors.

I have heard time and again from Granite Staters who call and write to my office that we must fight to protect the net neutrality rules, rules that create an even playing field and protect consumers from unfair practices.

What we are seeing here in Washington is different. At the request of big cable companies and internet service providers, the Republican-controlled FCC, led by Chairman Ajit Pai, is taking aim at commonsense consumer protections that could change the free and open internet as we know it. As rationale, Chairman Pai has claimed that since net neutrality rules went into effect 2 years ago, investments in U.S. broadband companies have dropped to historically low levels.

Quite the opposite has occurred. Since the rules went into effect, AT&T's share price has gone up more than 20 percent, Comcast has increased 26 percent, and several ISPs have reassured investors that net neutrality would have no impact on their broadband investments. So this is just another "gimme" to big cable and industry stakeholders who want to put profits ahead of customer service and consumer protections.

In New Hampshire, innovative, small businesses are the backbone of our economy, creating good jobs, stimulating economic growth, and net neutrality has been integral to their success. More than 1,000 startups, innovators, investors, and entrepreneurial support organizations from across the country, including the company Digital Muse, in New Hampshire, sent a letter to Chairman Pai urging him to protect net neutrality rules. I plan to fight to do just that.

In giving entrepreneurs a level playing field to turn an idea into a thriving business that reaches a global audience, net neutrality helps promote innovation and boost economic growth. By dismantling net neutrality rules, internet service providers will be allowed to force small service providers to pay to play online, causing instability to startups and entrepreneurs across the Nation who might not be able to afford such fees. Companies like Digital Muse should be able to compete based on the quality of their goods and services, not on their ability to pay tolls to internet service providers.

Net neutrality isn't just good for startups and entrepreneurs, it has also created a platform for traditionally underrepresented voices, including women and minorities, to be heard and, as important, to add to our economic strength. Last week, my friend Senator CANTWELL and I sent a letter with several of our colleagues to Chairman Pai highlighting the importance of net neutrality to women and girls across the country. An open internet serves as a platform to elevate voices that are underrepresented or marginalized in traditional media, an experience many women in the field know all too well.

When turned away from traditional media outlets, women can turn to the internet as an autonomous platform to tell their stories in their own voices thanks to the vast array of media platforms enabled by net neutrality. Between 2007 and 2016, while the total number of business firms in America increased by 9 percent, the total number of women-owned firms increased by 45 percent, a rate five times the national average. This growth in women-owned business mirrors the emergence of the free and open internet as a platform for economic growth. Net neutrality has been essential to the growth of women-owned, innovative businesses, ensuring them the opportunity to compete with more established brands and content.

In addition to empowering women economically, an open internet has the

ability to empower all citizens civically. The National Women's March in January brought together hundreds of thousands of people to raise their voices and organize in marches across the country and around the world, largely through online activism. The Women's March and the many other marches that have followed since January demonstrate how an open internet can serve as a powerful mechanism for civic engagement and strengthening communities. The open and free internet is too powerful of a tool for civic engagement and social and economic mobility—especially for our underrepresented populations—to take away. Strong net neutrality rules are absolutely essential. They protect against content discrimination, they prevent internet toll lanes, they allow the FCC adequate room for oversight, and they require reasonable transparency from internet service providers. The rules also provide stability to our economy, to our entrepreneurs, and our innovative small businesses—enterprises that are integral to New Hampshire's and America's economic success.

I will continue fighting to ensure that our regulatory environment is one that spurs innovation, fosters economic growth, supports our small businesses, and allows the next young person with a big idea to prosper. I strongly oppose rules that would undermine net neutrality, and I hope the FCC listens throughout the comment period to concerns from Granite Staters and Americans who feel the same way.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I see that my friend from Minnesota is here and wonder if he would like to speak to this issue as well.

Mr. FRANKEN. I would.

Ms. HASSAN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise to discuss the Trump administration's effort to undo the open internet order. Together we must protect net neutrality and ensure that all content on the internet receives equal treatment from broadband providers regardless of who owns the content or how deep their pockets are.

Two years ago, American consumers and businesses celebrated the FCC's landmark vote to preserve the free and open internet by reclassifying broadband providers as common carriers under title II of the Communications Act. The vote came after the SEC received nearly 4 million public comments, the vast majority of which urged the agency to enact strong rules protecting net neutrality.

Consumers urged the Commission to protect their unfettered and affordable access to content. A wide range of advocacy organizations pressed the Commission to ensure that broadband providers couldn't pick and choose which voices and ideas would actually reach consumers. Small and large businesses alike asked that the internet remain

an open marketplace where everyone can participate on equal footing, free from discrimination by companies like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T.

The FCC responded by establishing rules that are strong, clear, and enforceable; rules that prevent broadband providers from blocking or throttling lawful online content, and rules that stop providers from charging websites for access to fast lanes.

Perhaps, most importantly, the FCC implemented these rules within the time-tested legal framework that allows the agency to respond to challenges to net neutrality that arise in the future. Following the commonsense path I have long urged, the FCC recognized that broadband access is a title II service—a classification that the DC Circuit has upheld and had previously signaled was necessary in order to establish strong rules.

The FCC's vote to implement strong net neutrality rules was an important victory for American consumers and for American business, and that victory demonstrated the overwhelming power of grassroots activism and civic participation. In 2014, millions of Americans from across the political spectrum organized to ensure that their voices were heard, and in the process, they redefined civic engagement in our country, but in the 21st century, that kind of participation requires an open internet, a place where people can freely share information and engage in meaningful public discourse.

Because of net neutrality, a handful of multibillion-dollar companies cannot bury sites offering alternative viewpoints or attempt to control how users get their information. Because of net neutrality, people from across the Nation can connect with each other, share their ideas on the internet, and organize a community effort.

I have always called net neutrality the free speech issue of our time because it embraces our most basic constitutional freedoms. Unrestricted public debate is vital to the functioning of our democracy. Now, perhaps more than ever, the need to preserve a free and open internet is abundantly clear. That is why I am so concerned about Chairman Pai's proposal to gut the strong net neutrality rules we fought so hard for.

Tomorrow, the FCC will vote officially to initiate a proceeding to undo the open internet order, but, importantly, American consumers and businesses will once again have an opportunity to make their voices heard. I hope the American people will contact the FCC, that they will remain engaged and willing to speak up, and that they will continue to use the internet to spread ideas, organize support, and ultimately counter the deep-pocketed ISPs and the politicians who seek to undermine net neutrality.

Two years ago, the best principles of our democracy won out. I do believe that with the same energy and deter-

mination that has gotten us this far, net neutrality supporters can garner another win for the American people.

I thank the Presiding Officer for this opportunity to speak.

I yield to my good friend from the State of Hawaii.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I thank Mr. FRANKEN for his leadership on this issue. He is a person who understands the content industry and has been a fierce defender of people's ability to view content online, people's ability to express themselves online, and understands that a fair and open media marketplace is central to our democracy.

I want to address one assertion that was made by the proponents of repealing net neutrality; that is, that somehow the investment climate under net neutrality was harmed. They say there is some reason to believe that under net neutrality, the investment climate was diminished, but the Internet Association published research today that addressed this very issue, and their findings show that since 2015, when the rules went into place, telecommunications investment has actually increased. ISPs and their consumers are enjoying historically low production costs and innovation has increased. Free Press also published a report on this question earlier this week, and they found that investment in broadband by publicly traded companies actually went up after net neutrality went into place. Here is what the research director at the Free Press had to say: "If investment is the FCC's preferred metric, then there is only one possible conclusion—net neutrality and Title II are a smashing success."

Here is the point. The internet is not broken. There are parts of the economy that are not working well. We struggle with manufacturing. We need to invest in infrastructure. We have a trade imbalance. We have a higher education system that is not working for everybody. We need to do more work in these areas, but the part of our economy that is working great for consumers, for entrepreneurs, for the private sector, for engaged citizens is the internet itself. Tomorrow, the FCC is going to endeavor to break it.

Before I hand it over to someone who has been working on these issues for many years, I want to point out that nobody would have anticipated that the Affordable Care Act would still be on the books because of unprecedented online and inperson organizing.

The FCC has a very unique process where there is going to be a 3-month public comment period. The statute actually allows the public to go and weigh in on what they think. The last time this happened when net neutrality principles were being established, 3.8 million people commented. So far, before they even take their first formal action, there are 1.6 million people who have already commented. My guess is, by the time tomorrow is

done—maybe the next day—we will be well into the 2 to 3 million comment range, and they still have 3 months to go. Understand the power in our democracy still resides with the people. Somebody who has been working in the trenches on this issue and many consumer issues for a very long time is my great colleague, the senior Senator from Connecticut, and I will yield to him as I realize I think I am standing at his dais.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I begin by thanking my colleague and friend Senator SCHATZ for his extraordinary leadership in this area that has brought us to the floor. I am proud to speak against the Federal Communications Commission Chairman's proposed order that is in fact slated for a vote at the open commission meeting tomorrow morning. That vote would undo the open internet order.

What is at stake here is, really, First Amendment rights to free speech. Those rights are threatened. Net neutrality has never been more important. Allowing broadband providers to block or discriminate against certain content providers is a danger to free speech and the freedom of our press. These principles are fundamental to our democracy. We should safeguard them by stopping this proposed repeal of the open internet order.

The internet's astonishing economic success is due to its being open and the access that it provides as an open platform. Anyone with a good idea can connect with consumers. Anyone who wants to reach across the globe to talk to others or to pitch and promote ideas and products encounters a level playing field, and that ought to be the reality.

On February 25, 2015, the FCC adopted the open internet order to preserve that open nature of the internet. The order, essentially, embodies three rules—no blocking, no throttling, no paid prioritization. Those principles are now at risk. In fact, they are in grave jeopardy. Those principles guarantee people, within the bounds of the law, access to different web content regardless of the political views expressed and regardless of the wealth of a site. They assure that the internet is open—that it is not a walled garden for wealthy companies. A lot is at stake here, and consumers and others should prevail because their interests are, ultimately, what is involved.

Ultimately, the Administrative Procedure Act requires, in my view, that Chairman Pai prove, through a fact-based docket, that something has significantly changed in the market since the open internet rule was established in February of 2015. Without that change in facts, the decimation of this rule cannot be justified. We cannot allow Chairman Pai to succeed in this plan to gut neutrality at the behest of moneyed internet service providers. Chairman Pai's proposal, if it succeeds

tomorrow, will deprive the American people, startups, and businesses of important bright-line net neutrality rules. For that reason, I will fight it, and I hope my colleagues will join me in this effort.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise during Police Week to pay tribute to our police officers around the country—the men and women in blue who serve us every day in Ohio and in every State represented in this Chamber.

In Ohio, this is a particularly difficult week. Here we are during Police Week, and we are, once again, mourning the loss of a police officer. This happened just last Friday. Last Friday, a gunman took two people hostage in the woods behind a nursing home in Kirksville, OH, which is a small town about 25 miles east of Columbus.

The first one to arrive on the scene was the police chief of this small town. His name was Steven DiSario. Chief Steven DiSario confronted the assailant, and he was ambushed by this assailant. He was shot. He was killed. This gunman then went inside the nursing facility, and he murdered two staff members—a registered nurse, Marlina Medrano, and a nurse's aide named Cindy Krantz. Then he took his own life.

By the way, Police Chief Steven DiSario was 36 years old and had just become the police chief in Kirksville a month ago. The women who were slain were Marlina Medrano, who had a son, and Cindy Krantz, who had five kids, including a 10-year-old son. Those kids had to spend Mother's Day preparing for their moms' burials.

On Monday, I went to Kirksville and saw the memorial there for the officer. I also had an opportunity to meet with some of the officers who were from neighboring communities. There was just one police officer in Kirksville—just the chief. I was able to express to them the sympathy and the gratitude of the people throughout Ohio. I had brought a flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of Chief DiSario, and that flag will go to his family as a very small token of the appreciation and gratitude of all of us for their father's and husband's service.

Chief DiSario had six kids, and his widow, Aryn, is currently pregnant with their seventh child—a child who is never going to know his or her dad. What he or she will know is that he died a hero, that he died a hero in risking his life to protect innocent people.

That is what police officers do every single day. They keep us safe. They

take dangerous criminals and weapons and drugs off our streets. They enforce the law. Even their very presence helps to deter crime and keep our communities safer, but they do it all at great risk—at great risk to themselves and at great sacrifice to their families.

A little more than a year ago, I did a ride-along in Columbus with Officer Greg Meyer. He is one of those brave Columbus police officers who goes out every day to help keep our communities safe, and we were focused on a couple of issues that night in Columbus.

One was the drug trade, particularly the opioid crisis we face in Ohio. He was able to show me where much of this activity occurs, and we were able to see with our eyes some of the people who were trafficking drugs, dispersing, and what goes on in our communities.

We were also talking about human trafficking and his work in that area. We were able to go to some particular places at which there had been trafficking in the past and where the police had broken up trafficking rings in which girls and women had been made to become dependent on heroin. Then the traffickers had them, often in a hotel for a week until they had moved on to another one and trafficked—sold—human beings, usually online, usually through the iPhone. Again, this police officer was able to tell me about what he has done and what his force has done to help protect these girls and women and to help get them out of that situation.

This was just a few hours for me, and I always enjoy doing these ride-alongs, but this is his life and their lives every day. They are out there doing their best to try to protect us and to make our communities safer.

The day before this tragedy occurred in Kirksville, we had had a lot of police officers here in town because, on Thursday and Friday and over the weekend, police officers had been coming in for Police Week and Police Memorial Day, which was on Monday, so I had a chance to meet with a bunch of these officers and thank them for their service.

We talked about the fact that the job is dangerous and increasingly dangerous. Unfortunately, the numbers show that. Little did we know that, the day after we had been talking, there would have again been this tragedy in Ohio. We talked about the fact that some of their families have had sleepless nights because they do not know whether their husbands or their wives or their sons or daughters are going to be coming home.

In our Nation's history, more than 21,000 police officers have died in the line of duty. Think about that—21,000. We have already had 42 this year, 2017. In 2016, we lost 143, which is about one officer every 3 days. Again, last year, five of those fallen officers were from Ohio: Aaron Christian, a patrolman with the Chesapeake Police Department; Thomas Cottrell, a patrolman