

I know that several of my colleagues would, in response to those data points, argue that much of that is due to the great recession that took place at the initial stages of President Obama's time in office; however, a quick review of the quarterly growth rates since 1947 will show that there are normally periods of growth following recessions as the economy rebounds and the values of assets normalize again. In the case of the great recession of 2008 to 2009, that normal rebound did not occur, and a big reason why is the downward pressure imposed by our outdated tax scheme. Let's remember that the recession ended in June 2009—more than 8 years ago.

Others still might argue that this is all academic. They might even be brazen enough to claim that when we talk about the corporate tax rate, we are talking about the problems of the rich and not the middle class. Again, anyone making such an argument would simply be ignoring the facts and could be considered an idiot. Make no mistake—the crippling corporate tax rate in our country has stifled growth and investment in American businesses. This doesn't just impact Wall Street investors or rich CEOs, it has a negative effect on the middle class and on lower income workers. That effect comes in the form of fewer jobs, less investment in America, and sluggish growth and productivity that fuels wage and income growth.

Since 1953, real median family income in the United States—meaning that half of the country earned more and half of the country earned less—has grown at an average rate of 1.3 percent. Under the Obama administration, that same indicator—one of the best indicators of the true status of the middle class—grew at approximately half that rate, or 0.7 percent. The growth of the average hourly earnings of production and nonsupervisory workers during the Obama administration was half of the historic long-run average. What is more, labor force participation was set firmly on a downward trajectory throughout the Obama administration and has yet to recover.

As you can see, there is clear evidence that the economy is not working well for many American workers and middle-class families. Anyone arguing that our current tax system is a benefit to the middle class is, in my view, sadly misinformed or being deliberately misleading.

Over the years, I have seen many of my friends on the other side come to the Senate floor demanding new standards, higher wages, and increased protections for middle-class workers. Yet many of the tax policies they tend to support would have the opposite effect.

There is almost universal agreement among economists that the corporate tax is the most inefficient tax in existence. In addition, a large percentage—some economists say as much as 75 percent—of the burden imposed by the corporate tax is borne by a corpora-

tion's employees. In other words, our high corporate tax rate isn't just a burden on faceless corporations or rich shareholders, the burden is disproportionately borne by the factory workers and scientists and even the janitors who work for corporations, large and small.

A reduced corporate tax rate would allow American companies to compete with their international counterparts on a more level playing field. A reduced corporate tax rate would mean fewer businesses would move offshore, taking their jobs and investments elsewhere. A reduced corporate tax rate would incentivize more new companies to set up shop in the United States and lead more established companies to invest their capital and hire workers here rather than in lower tax jurisdictions found in places like Canada, the UK, Ireland, or elsewhere.

Mr. President, our shared goal should be to make the United States an inviting place to locate a business, invest, hire workers, and create new ideas and products, but that will not be the case so long as we cling to our punitive corporate tax system.

Now, of course, when it comes to tax reform, our focus needs to move beyond the corporate tax rates. We need to talk about making the individual tax system simpler and fairer and offer tax relief to the middle class and small, passthrough businesses. We need to talk more about fixing our international system to further improve the competitiveness of American job creators and prevent further erosion of our tax base. And we need to remove burdens on savings and investment that keep middle-class Americans from generating and accumulating wealth for the future.

I am going to talk more about all of these topics and others in the coming weeks and months.

All of the improvements that we can make on these tax issues will become key elements of an effective tax reform package. In addition, I believe they are all areas where Republicans and Democrats can find agreement if we are all committed to the same goal—growing our economy to benefit the middle class.

As I have said here on the floor many times, tax reform does not have to be another partisan exercise. I hope my Democratic colleagues will opt to join Republicans in this effort. As they have acknowledged the problems with our current tax system, I sincerely hope they will want to work with us to find a way to fix that tax system.

As I said, I will have more to say in the near future, but these issues—our outdated business tax system and profanely high corporate tax rate—will not simply go away. I personally am committed to fixing these problems and will work with anyone who is willing to join the effort in good faith.

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.

Ms. CANTWELL. 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.

NET NEUTRALITY

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon with my colleague, the Senator from Hawaii, who has been leading our efforts on coordinating a very loud and resounding voice on trying to stop the FCC from running over an open internet, and I thank him for his organization for today. I know we will be joined by our colleague, Senator WYDEN from Oregon—and perhaps the other Senator from Oregon and several others—to talk about this important issue.

We are here today to try to draw attention to one of those important economic issues before us: the need to preserve an open internet with strong net neutrality laws.

We are facing a pivotal moment in the fight to preserve an open and fair internet. A strong and open internet is, without question, one of the great innovations of our time and one of the great job creators of our time. Yet the Trump administration stands poised to undo the bedrock principle of net neutrality in the face of evidence it would undermine our economy and undermine future job growth.

The FCC has announced its intention to go against the demands of 5 million American consumers and reverse what is an existing rule so that big cable companies and telecom providers can erect toll lanes; that is, if you want fast internet speed, you have to pay more. This would threaten the fundamental nature of our internet and the innovation economy.

Last week, FCC Commissioner Clyburn and I held a townhall meeting on net neutrality in Seattle. More than 300 people attended, and not one was in favor of paying higher prices to their cable company for worse or inhibited internet services.

Many people shared their personal stories about how an internet with toll lanes would affect them negatively. We heard from many small businesses and startups that they were afraid of losing business because they might have to charge higher prices to their customers if these important protections were reversed.

I heard from people with health problems and their concerns about health emergencies while away from home. The absence of net neutrality rules would mean that a doctor in their small hometown could not get critical information to the medical practitioners who are dealing with a patient in an emergency so that they could get important lifesaving treatments. Whether you are a doctor examining a patient via telemedicine or in an emergency room in Seattle or a student in a rural community trying to access the

internet to get information, take a test or do research, a fast connection is necessary. Your ability to have a fast connection is something you are more than just a little concerned about. Being artificially slowed down in favor of big companies that buy faster lanes would turn our economy in the wrong direction.

Our economy is in the midst of a massive technological transformation. As technology advances, incredible opportunities and new jobs are created. Every business plan of every startup relies on the ability to get content to consumers.

Largely as a result of innovation and the proliferation of hundreds of startups in the United States, the internet economy today is now worth \$966 billion and accounts for almost 6 percent of our U.S. GDP. This is a higher percentage of the U.S. economy than many other industry sectors, including construction, mining, utilities, agriculture, and education.

Net neutrality—meaning you have an open internet that is not artificially slowed down unless you pay a ransom—is important for small businesses and startups and entrepreneurs who rely so much now on an integrated business model where internet access, marketing, and advertising their products and services to reach customers is critical. We need an open internet. We need it to foster job creation, competition, and innovation for the almost 3 million Americans workers who already rely on the internet economy today.

When net neutrality was implemented a year-plus ago, we were protecting and making sure there was no uneven playing field. Basically, because of the regulations, we were able to help small businesses and entrepreneurs thrive. But our internet providers are internet gatekeepers, and without net neutrality, they would seize upon the opportunity to change that.

One slice of the internet economy—the app economy, which is growing every single day—consists of everyone who makes money and has a job, thanks to mobile apps powered by an open internet. Today, 1.7 million Americans have jobs because of this economy. Nearly 92,000 of those jobs are in my State of Washington.

Over the past 5 years, the app economy jobs have grown at an annual rate of 30 percent. I don't know of another sector that is growing that fast. The average growth rate for all other jobs is about 1.6 percent. By 2020, the app economy could grow to over \$100 billion. Why is this so important? Because we all know that these various applications and apps make our lives better. They make it easier. In a busy world, they are helping us do the things that are so important to us with more ease and more certainty.

The internet economy is dynamic and supercharged in creating job growth. This phenomenon of economic growth trajectory would not be pos-

sible without the internet as a platform for economic activity. This is why it is so important that the FCC not, in the dark of night, put down a rule without public comment to try to stop and change this direction that has already been protected by past FCC Commissioners. This is why my colleagues and I are here today on a date when everybody is trying to raise awareness—because the FCC could act as early as August 18 to try to change these rules.

It is important that we oppose any new FCC actions trying to dismantle an open internet. We need to make sure we are talking about the harm to consumers, the harm to innovation, and the fact that internet speeds for American consumers are important and consumers shouldn't be burdened by a cable company holding you at ransom to pay more just to get faster speeds.

Consumers are already struggling with high prices. Cable bills rose 39 percent from 2011 to 2015, eight times the rate of inflation. In 2015, the average consumer cable TV bill was \$99 a month; just a year later, the average consumer cable bill had risen by 4 percent to over \$103. My guess is a lot of people listening to this now are probably thinking, boy, where are we today?

One of the most popular arguments by the enemies of an open internet is that it suppresses investment and leaves consumers with poor broadband infrastructure. That is a false claim. Data shows that investment by publicly traded cable companies and big telephone companies was 5 percent higher during the 2-year period following our protection of an open internet. Clearly, people are continuing to make investment.

I want to make sure people understand that we do not want to see a change in this policy. We do not want to see American consumers run over by large cable companies that are demanding higher rates. We want to make sure that we don't end up with a two-tiered internet system—one for big companies who will pay and pay and pay for faster rates, and consumers who are left with a very slowed-down, challenging to use internet, which makes it hard for us to continue to innovate.

I encourage the American consumer to go out and contact the FCC. Yes, your voice can be heard. The FCC has already received 5 million comments, and they have until August 17 to hear more. Today, we are asking everybody in America to say: Please don't slow down my internet connection. Don't hurt our economy; don't hurt American business. Invest in innovation, and keep an open internet for the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Washington for her leadership on tech and technology issues and, in particular, on net neutrality.

I would like to amend one thing she said. She said that we got about 5 million comments in favor of net neutrality on this question. It is true. Yesterday we had 5 million and change, but I just checked, and we are at 6.728 million, and more and more people are weighing in on this important issue.

As of today, it is important to point out that net neutrality is the law of the land. We are not asking for a change in the way that the internet operates. We are asking for the internet, as we know it, to be preserved.

What does that really mean? It means you have an arrangement with your ISP. You pay your internet service provider for access to the internet, and you get the whole internet. Your provider does not get to decide what you access. You do. Whether it is NBC or ABC, Hulu or Netflix or Breitbart or Google or Yahoo or Facebook or the New York Times or RedState or HotAir or whatever you want, you get to go there, and everything comes down from the internet at whatever speed it comes down. But without net neutrality, that arrangement could change.

The free and open internet, as we understand it, is a premise of the way we use the internet. It is a premise of the internet economy. It is a premise of Silicon Valley. It has now become a premise of car companies and real estate companies and anybody who does business online that, of course, you wouldn't have to pay money to an ISP to make sure your website loads fast enough so that consumers can see it. But that freedom, that free and open internet, really is in danger.

Here is what is happening: The FCC, the Federal Communications Commission, is trying to change the internet by ending the net neutrality rules that were put in place. If they succeed, your ISP will have the power to stop you from seeing certain kinds of content. They will be the ones that get to make decisions about what you can access and how fast—not you. It is a foundational change in the way the internet operates.

Now, some people—including the internet company lobbyists and their CEOs—will say: Look, the companies aren't going to change the internet even if the law goes away. In fact, we are committing to voluntary net neutrality. That is what they say.

But I want you to think about how likely it is that a publicly traded company will not at least explore the possibility of different business models, and here is the problem: There may be opportunities without net neutrality for them to make more money.

Right now I have basic cable in my apartment. I don't have HBO. Back in Hawaii I have HBO and the whole deal, but in my apartment here I have more basic cable. I pay for a certain number of channels. I don't get access to the entire TV universe. I pay for packages. There is no reason under the law, should they repeal net neutrality, that

an ISP couldn't give the liberal package, which you could pay \$75 for, or the conservative package, which you could pay \$75 for, or the NBC-related families package, which you could pay \$120 for—or maybe it is free because it is part of a vertical, which is included in your ISP.

The whole idea is that there is nothing preventing them—except these net neutrality laws—from deciding whom you get, where you get to visit, and how fast the downloads come. This is especially important, of course, in the entertainment space, when we are all streaming TV, news, movies, and even gaming online so the relationship between the person who creates the content and you is going to be intermediated by an ISP.

If you have a great app idea, right now you just have to have a great app idea. If you have a great website, people can log on to your website and you are in business. If you have the next great website, if you have eBay or Craigslist or Amazon, but it is post-net neutrality and the FCC goes through with this, you will not need a bunch of engineers but a bunch of lawyers and business sharks to try to negotiate with the ISP to even get in the door.

Students could have less access to online resources, including online classes. Realtors would be stopped from using online tools to sell their homes. Patients might not be able to use the internet to communicate with their doctors or monitor their health. Musicians, photographers, entrepreneurs will use the tools everybody depends on to make a living or share their art online.

I was talking to somebody I know in the tech community, and they were saying that this is a parade of horrors. None of this is going to come true.

I asked: Why do you think that is true? Why do you think this is just some apocryphal scenario I am describing? If you were an ISP, why wouldn't you slice up the internet and sell it for more? If you are the one controlling the access to it and you are a publicly traded company, you have no duty to a free and open internet. You have a duty to maximize shareholder profits.

If your board of directors comes to you and says: You know what, this whole “you pay a flat fee and you get the whole internet,” that is not the right business model. Look at these areas where ISPs are the only provider in many communities. The idea that the consumer has a choice in lots of rural communities, you have only one broadband provider in the first place.

Why wouldn't a broadband provider slice and dice up the internet and charge you a la carte? They can get more money for this. It is not that they are bad people. It is that they are duty bound to maximize profits.

Today, July 12, is the day of action. The internet is pushing back. Today we stand up to the FCC so the internet remains free and open. As we speak—I

mean literally as we speak—thousands and thousands of people across the country by the minute are logging on to the FCC website to express themselves.

I have to say, this has become a Democratic issue. This has become a progressive issue, but it wasn't so long ago that people in the conservative movement were worried about media consolidation and the conservative movement was saying: Hey, listen, I don't know who is going to own my media company, but I want to get to my websites to get my content at whatever rate it comes down. Don't tell me what information I get to have access to.

Everybody uses the internet. Many people are spending dozens of hours a week on the internet via their phones, via their television, via their broadband connection at home, and the innovation economy that underlies our economic growth is really in jeopardy.

I know it is an arcane process. I know most people probably haven't even heard of the FCC. To talk about net neutrality and lay all this jargon on you, it is concerning that the free and open internet is really in danger. We have this unique opportunity because unlike what happened a few months ago with consumer privacy, where very quickly this body reversed a rule that provides for privacy so your broadband providers can't resell your personal browsing data to a third-party advertiser or any other company—that happened very quickly and without any public input.

Here is the really good thing about the FCC process. The statute provides for public input. We are in a public comment period, and July 17 is the deadline. There is an opportunity for people to let their voices be heard. The internet should be in the hands of people, not in the hands of companies.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I join with the Senator from Hawaii, the Senator from Washington State, and I know the Senator from Oregon is going to be joining us very soon and taking this long, hot summer day in Washington and turning up the heat on the Trump administration and the big broadband companies.

Today the internet is having a protest. More than 80,000 websites are participating in today's national day of action on net neutrality to stand up for the fundamental right for a free and open internet.

Today's action involves some of the internet's biggest names: Netflix, Twitter, Amazon, Snapchat, Mozilla, Yelp, Airbnb. It also includes many others. My own website and other Democratic Senators and House Members have joined in today's protests.

Earlier today, right outside on the Capitol lawn, I gathered with many of my Senate and House colleagues, along

with businesses and advocacy, consumer protection, nonprofit, and political organizations to send a singular message: We will defend net neutrality.

Net neutrality is the basic principle that says that all internet traffic is treated equally. It applies the principles of nondiscrimination to the online world, ensuring that internet service providers—AT&T, Charter, Verizon, Comcast, among others—do not block, do not slow down, do not censor or prioritize internet traffic.

Yet today, the internet—this monumental, diverse, dynamic, democratic platform—is under attack. President Trump and his FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai, are threatening to disrupt this hallmark of American innovation and democracy by gutting net neutrality rules. They have put internet freedom on the chopping block. We are facing a historic fight.

If Trump's FCC gets its way, a handful of big broadband companies will serve as gatekeepers to the internet. We cannot let this happen. That is why millions of Americans are standing up and making sure their voices are heard at the Federal Communications Commission.

They know the internet—the world's greatest platform for commerce and communications—is at stake. It is net neutrality that ensures that those with the best ideas, not merely the best access, can thrive in the 21st century economy; that a garage-based startup in Malden, MA, can have the same online reach and scope as a major tech firm in Silicon Valley.

It is net neutrality that has made the Internet an innovation incubator and job generator for the entire Nation. It is net neutrality that has been the internet's chief governing principle since its inception.

Consider that today essentially every company is an internet company. In 2016, almost half of the venture capital funds invested in the United States went toward internet-specific and software companies. That is \$25 billion worth of venture capital funding in our country. Half of all venture capital went into that sector, this innovation sector that continues to transform not only our own economy but the whole world's economy. At the same time, to meet America's insatiable demand for broadband internet, U.S. broadband and telecommunications industry companies invested more than \$87 billion in capital expenditures in 2015. That is the highest rate of annual investment in the last 10 years by the broadband companies.

We have hit a sweet spot. Investment in broadband and wireless technologies is high. Job creation is high. Venture capital investment in online startups is high. That is what we want. We want both the broadband companies and all of these smaller companies—whose names escape us because there are tens of thousands of them—to have a chance to coexist and have the innovation continue, even as the large companies continue to invest in broadband expansion.

It is the free and open internet that has allowed us to enter a new phase of the digital revolution—the internet of things era—where our devices, our appliances, and everyday machines now connect with one another.

The digital revolution is a global economic engine, and net neutrality is its best fuel. Taking these rules off the books makes no sense. With these net neutrality protections in place, there is no problem that needs fixing. It is working right now perfectly.

In May, Chairman Ajit Pai and the Republican FCC voted to begin a proceeding that will effectively eliminate net neutrality protections, allowing a handful of broadband providers to control the internet. Chairman Pai's proposal would decimate the open internet order and the net neutrality rules that are protecting the free flow of ideas, commerce, and communications in our country.

Now the big broadband barons and their Republican allies say we need a light-touch regulatory framework. Let's be honest. When the broadband behemoths say "light touch," what they really mean is "hands off"—hands off their ability to choose online winners and losers.

We are not fooled when AT&T engages in alternative facts and says they support net neutrality and today's day of action. They don't support title II, and they don't support net neutrality. We must shine light on this kind of corporate deception.

What the broadband providers really want is an unregulated online ecosystem where they can stifle the development of competing services that cannot afford an internet easy pass.

Chairman Pai says he likes net neutrality but simply wants to eliminate the very order that established today's net neutrality rules. That is like saying you want to have your cake and eat it too. It makes no sense.

President Trump and his Republican allies are waging an all-out assault on every front that they can on our core democratic values. Whether it is healthcare, immigration, climate change, or net neutrality, they want to end the vital protections that safeguard our families and hand over power to corporations and special interests. We know better.

We need to make our voices heard. A political firestorm of opposition will protect our economy, protect our free speech, protect our democracy. We must protect net neutrality as a core principle in a modern 21st century America, in a modern America where the smallest company online can aspire to reach all 320 million Americans in a nondiscriminatory way, where the smallest company can raise the capital in order to accomplish that goal, where the smallest company doesn't have to ask for permission to be able to innovate in our society, where the smallest doesn't have to first raise the money to ensure they can pay to have access to this incredible economic engine of en-

trepreneurial expression that has been the internet for this last generation, where free speech, the First Amendment, this ability to be able to speak unfettered, uncontrolled by corporate America and whether or not you can afford to speak, is something that continues to be protected in our country.

That is what net neutrality is all about. The principles of nondiscriminatory access is what gave us Google and eBay, Amazon and Hulu, YouTube and Etsy, Zulily, Wayfair, TripAdvisor, and company after company that knew they could access every single potential consumer in our country and could, as a result, raise the capital necessary to ensure that engine of economic entrepreneurial innovation could be deployed from their minds in changing fundamentally the economy of our country and the economy of the world.

In 2017, every company is an internet company. Every company depends upon free and open access to the internet. That is what we have been transformed into in just the last 20 years.

I was the Democratic coauthor of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. In 1996, not one home in America had broadband. Can I say that again? Just 20 years ago, not one home in America had broadband. But we changed the rules to create this chaotic entrepreneurial world where all of a sudden all of these companies whose names are now common household names could be created, transforming our economy.

There is no problem. They are trying to fix a problem that does not exist.

We need to give the next generation of entrepreneurs the same opportunity to innovate that the last generation had—not to get permission, not to ask: Pretty please, may I reach all 320 million Americans? No, ladies and gentlemen, that is not what this revolution is about. That is not what young people all across this country—with brilliant new ideas to further transform our American economy online—want to have as an obstacle.

What will happen now is you will have an idea, but if you can't raise the money to pay for this fast-lane broadband access, that is going to throttle back your ability to be able to move in this agile way that the internet provides. Instead of agility, it will be hostility that you will be feeling as an entrepreneur, feeling you can't take the risk—you are not sure you can reach your customers; you are not sure you can pay the broadband company—rather than ensuring that you can reach all these consumers for your revolutionary idea.

This internet day of action we are having across the country is going to raise from 5 million, to 6 million, to 7 million, to 10 million, to 15 million, to 20 million, the number of Americans who are going to be saying to the Federal Communications Commission and to the U.S. House and Senate that something is fundamentally wrong with this FCC and its potential change of the internet—Open Internet Order.

If they do move, we are going to court. If they do move, we are going to be taking this all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States of America because that is how important this issue is. It goes right to the fundamental nature of what has happened to our economy in the last 20 years. And that is all it took. We moved from the black rotary dial phone to a world where everyone is carrying a computer in their pockets. It happened just like that. It could have happened before that, but it wasn't possible because the broadband companies didn't even exist. There were just telephone companies and cable companies that did not have a vision of the future. Their vision of the future is a lot like their vision of the past before that law passed, which is, let's go back to total control by a small handful of companies in our communications cocktail, rather than thinking of the future, as tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of smaller companies can be started up in dorm rooms and garages across our Nation.

This is a dangerous and harmful plan the FCC has on the books today. Today's day of internet action will be increasing as each moment goes by between now and the day they make that decision at the FCC.

Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to build on the last point my colleague—a great advocate and champion of net neutrality—made about the rule of law and about the need to go to court when there is utter disrespect and contempt for the rule of law, which is reflected in the prospective plan of the Chairman of the FCC to undo that agency's net neutrality rules. It reflects an astonishing lack of respect and care for that agency's rules—in fact, the rules that apply to all agencies under the Administrative Procedure Act.

Chairman Pai wants to overturn a rule that was established after a fact-finding—an elaborate process of comment and response—without going through that same process that is required under the Administrative Procedure Act, a fact-based docket that requires him to show that something has changed—not a little bit; something significant has changed—in the market since the Open Internet Order was established in February 2015. The burden is on the FCC to make that finding. That finding is impossible, which is why they are avoiding the attempt to do it.

The fact is, the Open Internet Order was established based on 10 years of evidence about how internet access service provides people with broadband. It has been upheld by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals twice over the last year. The thicket of law that the Chairman wants to simply leap over—it is not within his discretion to do.

The most recent evidence shows that net neutrality has not inhibited network investment at all, in contrast to Chairman Pai's claims. According to statements this year by the internet service providers—AT&T, in fact, is expanding fiber deployment and calling fiber a growth opportunity. Comcast is saying that it doubles its network capacity every 18 to 24 months. Verizon is announcing a new \$1 billion investment in cable. That is why we are here saying we will not and we cannot allow Chairman Pai to succeed in this plan to gut neutrality at the behest of big cable companies.

I am proud to speak today in support of the Day of Action to Save Net Neutrality and against the FCC proposal to undo the Open Internet Order because it is really a consummate pro-consumer measure. The Open Internet Order serves the best interests of consumers directly but also the best interests of competition in promoting innovation, new ideas, and insights—an open platform that is necessary for innovation and insights that benefit consumers, as well as the products and services that companies generally provide.

The Open Internet Order created three bright-line rules: No blocking, no throttling, and no pay prioritization. These rules apply to both fixed and mobile broadband service, which protects consumers no matter how they access the internet, whether on a desktop or a mobile service. Consumers deserve equal access, an open platform—no walls benefiting the companies that may want their gardens walled in. The walls are against consumer interest, and breaking down those walls is what the open internet rule sought to do.

It also has real First Amendment significance. In one of the most recently proposed megamergers—AT&T and Time Warner—clearly content, access, and neutrality are at stake. This merger gives the combined company, if the merger is approved, both the incentive and the means to throttle First Amendment expression. There have been reports that the White House will use this merger, in fact, to throttle the First Amendment rights of CNN, which is owned by Time Warner. This would be a direct threat to all First Amendment liberties.

Using antitrust policy and power to diminish or demean the rights of free expression would be a grave disservice to this country, as well as the rule of law. That is why I have written to the nominee for the Department of Justice Antitrust Division chief, the Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust, Makan Delrahim, and asked for a meeting so he can ensure us that, in fact, antitrust policy will be independently enforced, that these reports do not reflect his view or the administration policy. I want him to assure us that this merger will in no way be used to influence or impede any media outlet.

But access and an open internet are principles that go beyond the enforce-

ment of antitrust law; they are principles enforced by the FCC for the public good. That is why this Day of Action to Save Net Neutrality is so critically important, because the grassroots movement here is what will save the day. The grassroots and consumer-driven impetus to make sure that the internet remains a free and open platform for consumers and innovators, not a walled garden for wealthy companies, is what we seek today.

That is why I am proud to stand with other colleagues who have spoken and to continue this battle and to say to all of our colleagues that we will go to court, because the rule of law and the Administrative Procedure Act are not technical, abstruse, arcane, unimportant rules; they are at the core of fairness and administrative regularity, not just regulation, the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before he leaves the floor, let me just commend my friend from Connecticut on a very thoughtful statement. He has worked on these issues for many years since his days as attorney general in Connecticut. He is, in my view, the Senate's best lawyer. So it is great to have a chance to team up with him and our colleagues.

I think this issue can really be summed up in a sentence, and that is this: Without net neutrality, you do not have a free and open internet because the essence of the internet—and I will explain what we have today—would simply not be the same.

Today—and this is what net neutrality is all about, in a sentence—after you pay your internet access fee, you get to go where you want, when you want, and how you want, and everybody is treated the same. From the most affluent person in America to those who are walking on an economic tightrope every single day, they all can use the internet to get access to those fundamental opportunities that are so essential to increasing the quality of life for our people. This, for example, is how a young person will have a chance to learn. If they are in a small, rural community in Colorado, Oregon, or elsewhere, this is how they get access to the kind of information that affluent kids get, who might live in Beverly Hills or Palm Beach or in any one of a number of communities where there are affluent people. This is what puts that youngster on the same plane as the affluent person. This is how, for example, those who are searching for jobs can go to the net and quickly get access to information where they will have a chance to get ahead.

The internet—and a free and open internet—is particularly important to our startups, the innovators, and the small businesses that we are all counting on to have a chance to grow big. When you talk, particularly, to the

small tech startups, they will say: Our goal is to be Google or Facebook. Innovation is what makes it possible to have those kinds of dreams. If you are starting small, with real net neutrality, as I have described it, you have the same chance to succeed as everybody else in America.

Now the challenge here is that very powerful interests—the cable companies, for example—want to change that. They want to change what I described as net neutrality. They would like to set up what they call priority lanes, special lanes, or toll lanes, where, if you pay more, you can get access to more. You can get access to more content, and you can get access to data and information more quickly.

What this really does is that it means those other people I was talking about—that startup trying to come out of the gate and be a success in the marketplace, students, and people who need information about healthcare and jobs and the like—are not treated the same way as the people with the deep pockets. All of a sudden their access to data and information is going to be different. It might be slower. Maybe they will not get it at all.

The big powerful interests aren't going to tell everybody in America that they are against net neutrality. They will not be holding rallies saying: We have gotten together to oppose net neutrality. They will not be showing up in Denver, Minneapolis, Portland, or anywhere else and saying: We are against net neutrality. The reason they can't is because the public overwhelmingly supports net neutrality, as I have described it.

They are going to say things like this: They are for net neutrality, but they just don't want all this government associated with what they have. They will be for voluntary net neutrality.

I know the Presiding Officer of the Senate has young children as well. I can tell you that we are about as likely to make voluntary net neutrality work as we are to get William Peter Wyden, my 9-year-old son, to voluntarily agree to limit himself to one dessert with his deciding whether he has met his limit. It is not going to happen.

Voluntary net neutrality isn't that different than what we have had in a lot of instances before we had real net neutrality. The big cable companies and others were always looking for dodges and loopholes, and they found ways to tack on fees and the like because that has always been their end game. Boy, it is a lawyer's full employment program because they have the capacity to litigate this.

So this idea that people are going to hear a lot about in the next few weeks—that they are really for net neutrality, but we will just make it voluntary—I want people to understand that the history of those kinds of approaches is not exactly sterling. I think it is about as likely to be successful as limiting my kid to voluntarily holding back on dessert.

I also want to make clear what our challenge is going to be about because the Federal Communications Commission—Senator BLUMENTHAL talked about it and others—is going to be making decisions on this before too long. We know where the votes are. This is going to be a long battle, but one of the reasons I wanted to come to the floor today is to say that this is another one of these issues that is going to show that political change doesn't start in Washington, DC, and then trickle down to people. It will be bottom-up, as more and more Americans find out what is at stake here.

A few years back, I would say the Presiding Officer of the Senate—and I see my colleague from the Finance Committee here, as well—and my colleagues will remember the PIPA and SOPA bills. These were the bills, PIPA and SOPA, that were anti-internet bills. As with so much, people can have a difference of opinion, and the sponsors said: We have to fight piracy. We have to fight piracy, people ripping everybody off online. To fight piracy, we will use these two bills to kind of change the architecture of the internet, particularly the domain name system, which is basically the phone book of the internet.

I looked at it, and I said: We are all against piracy. We are against people selling fake Viagra, or whatever it is online, but why would we want to wreck the architecture of the internet in order to deal with it? There are other kinds of remedies.

So I put in a bill with a conservative Republican in the other body to come up with an alternative approach, and I put a hold on PIPA and SOPA. Here in the Senate, at that time, 44 Senators were cosponsors of that bill. That is an army—out of the 100, 44 Senators.

Everybody said: You know, RON is putting a hold on it, and, well, he is a nice guy and, you know, he is from Oregon.

Everybody smiled, and I said: OK, I understand that you think this is going to be a slam dunk, but I think I will tell you that you should know that there are more Americans who spend more time online in a week than they do thinking about their U.S. Senator in 2 years, and they aren't going to be happy with a whole bunch of powerful interests messing with the internet, just as we are doing with this situation where people want to unravel real net neutrality.

So a vote was scheduled on whether to oppose my hold—in effect, lift my hold—on this flawed bill, and 4 days before the vote, more than 10 million Americans called, texted, tweeted, and logged in to say to their Senator: Do not vote to lift RON WYDEN's hold.

About 36 hours after Americans had weighed in, the Senate leadership called me, not very happy, and said: You won. We are not going to have a vote. Your hold has prevailed.

I bring this up only by way of saying that it is going to take that same kind

of grassroots uprising for Americans who want to keep real net neutrality, which is what you have after you pay your internet access fee, and you get to go where you want, when you want, and how you want, and everybody is treated equally in those efforts. For all of us who want to keep that, we need to understand that we are in for a long battle. We know where the votes are at the Federal Communications Commission, but that is just the beginning. That is just the beginning.

So now is the time to make your voice heard. Go to battleforthenet.com so your voices can be heard. Make sure that Donald Trump's FCC Commissioner knows your view that the internet is better and stronger with real net neutrality protections. Americans have only until July 17 to do this.

I have already been speaking out in other kinds of sessions. So I think I will leave it at that.

I wish to close by saying again that without real strong net neutrality, which is what we have today, we will not have a free and open internet for all Americans to enjoy. So I come to the floor to say this is going to be a long battle. Nobody thought we had a prayer to win the fight to protect the internet that was PIPA and SOPA, and I am sure a lot of people are saying that this is another one where the powerful interests are going to win.

I say to the Senate again: Not so fast. You are going to see the power of Americans speaking out. I urge all the people of this country who are following what goes on in the Senate today and in the days ahead to be part of this effort, because I think if they do, if we show that political change isn't top-down but bottom-up, it is going to be a long battle, but we will win, and our country will keep a bedrock principle of the free and open internet, which is real net neutrality.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Texas.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we continue to discuss the Better Care Act, which is an alternative bill that we will propose next week and vote on, which takes the disaster known as ObamaCare which for millions of Americans has led to sky-high premiums and unaffordable deductibles, if they can even find an insurance company that will sell them an insurance product—we will propose a better care act, as we call it, not a perfect care act but a better care act.

It would be even better if our Democratic colleagues would join us and work with us in this effort, but as we have come to find out, they are unwilling to acknowledge the failures of ObamaCare. So we are forced to do this without their assistance. It would be better if it were bipartisan, if they would work with us, but they have made it very clear that they are not interested in changing the broken structure of ObamaCare. What I predict is

that what they would offer is an insurance company bailout, throwing perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars at insurance companies in order to sustain a broken ObamaCare that will never work—no matter how much money you throw at it. So people will continue to suffer from the failures of ObamaCare unless we will have the courage to step forward and to say we are going to do the very best we can with the tough hand we have been dealt to help save the American people who are being hurt right now.

Basically, there are four principles involved. One is we want to stabilize the individual insurance market, which is the one that insurance companies are fleeing now because they are bleeding red ink. They can't make any money, and they are tired of losing money so they basically pull their roots up and leave town, leaving customers in the lurch.

Secondly, we want to make sure we actually lower insurance premiums. Under the original discussion draft bill that we introduced about a week or so ago, the Congressional Budget Office said we will see premiums go down as much as 30 percent over time. Now, I wish I could say we were going to be able to have an immediate effect on those premiums, but the truth is this is much better than our friends across the aisle have offered us with the offer to basically sustain a broken ObamaCare system.

The third thing we want to do is protect people who might have their health insurance hurt or impeded by preexisting conditions. We want to maintain the current law so people are protected when they leave their work or when they change jobs.

The fourth is, we want to put Medicaid on a sustainable path. Medicaid is one of the three major entitlement programs, and now we spend roughly \$400 billion on Medicaid in this country. Our friends across the aisle don't want to do anything that would keep that from growing higher and higher and higher, to the point where basically the system collapses. We believe that is not the responsible choice. What we propose is to spend \$71 billion more on Medicaid over the budget window and to work to transition those States that have expanded Medicaid and offer their people a better option in the private insurance area, but I just want to mention that I have shared a number of stories about, for example, a small business owner in Donna, TX, who was forced to fire their employees so they could afford to keep the doors open and provide health insurance for the remaining people. You have to ask: What in the world could lead us to a system which would discourage people from hiring more folks and basically put them in a position where they had to fire them in order to make ends meet? But that is what the employer mandate did under ObamaCare. If you have more than 50 employees, you are subject to