

benefit to families and small businesses across the Nation. I am grateful to the members of the conference committee for their hard work to resolve the differences between the two bills. I look forward to voting for the final product soon.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Don R. Willett, of Texas, to be a Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ELECTION OF DOUG JONES

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as we know, last night a Democrat won in the State of Alabama for the first time in a quarter century.

Last night's election of Doug Jones was not only the repudiation of a candidate unfit to serve in this body; it was an affirmation of a candidate who represents the very best of public service.

I read Doug Jones' bio. One story stands out in my mind. As a second-year law student, Doug Jones skipped class to attend the trial of the Klansman ringleader of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church—an event, as we all remember, that shook the conscience of our country and helped launch a mighty movement for civil rights. Although a young Doug Jones was moved by the disposition of justice in that trial, he was left with the impression that other members of the conspiracy had escaped the reach of the law. So 24 years later, when Doug Jones became the U.S. attorney in Alabama, he pursued charges against two more Klan members involved in the bombing, winning their conviction, and delivered a long-delayed but mighty righteous justice.

Doug Jones deserved to win the race last night. He is a fine man, was an excellent candidate, and is going to make an outstanding Senator for the people of Alabama. I congratulate Senator-Elect Jones and look forward to welcoming him to this Chamber and our caucus.

Two additional points in regard to the election, which has a link to the Chamber here:

First, the election of a Democrat in such a conservative State, which hadn't had a Democratic Senator since 1996—they elected one in 1990, I guess—is a clarion call for bipartisanship. The American people are clamoring for us to work together, to eschew the politics of divisiveness and once again conduct our politics with civility, decency, and an eye toward compromise. That is what Doug Jones represented as a candidate, it is what he campaigned on, and his election should signal to all of my Republican colleagues that the American people, from the deepest red States to the deepest blue States, yearn for our politics to function again in a bipartisan way.

The election of a Democrat in such a conservative State is a clarion call for bipartisanship. The people of Alabama have spoken, and they have sent a message asking both Democrats and Republicans to work together to solve our greatest challenges. That is how Doug Jones campaigned. Roy Moore did not try to pursue any scintilla of bipartisanship, and it might have been one of the reasons he lost, particularly in the suburbs of Birmingham and other cities. I hope we in this body will take this election in earnest and pursue a course of bipartisanship.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

The election of Doug Jones should have another effect on this Chamber as well. It would be unseemly and imprudent to rush a massive piece of partisan legislation through this Chamber before Doug Jones is seated. To rush such a huge piece of legislation when the people of Alabama have just sent us a new Senator and try to jam it through before he gets here would be so wrong. Doug Jones will be the duly elected Senator from the State of Alabama in a few short weeks. The Governor didn't appoint him. The people chose him. It would be wrong for Senate Republicans to jam through this tax bill without giving the newly elected Senator from Alabama the opportunity to cast his vote. The people of Alabama deserve to have their representative in the Senate to debate the biggest issues of the day, and the tax bill certainly falls under that category.

Today, we Senate Democrats are calling on Leader McConnell to hit pause on his tax bill and not hold a final vote on it until Doug Jones is sworn into the Senate. That is exactly what Republicans argued when Scott Brown was elected in 2010. Referring to healthcare, Leader McConnell said it would be "gamesmanship" to pursue big-ticket legislation before Scott Brown was seated. He asked us to "honor the wishes of the people of Massachusetts." Leader Reid, in fact, acceded to that wish and waited until Scott Brown was a Senator before there were any further votes on healthcare. "We're going to wait until the new senator arrives until we do anything more on healthcare," he said.

As too often has happened, Senator McConnell does one thing when Republicans are in charge and a different thing when Democrats are in charge. Here is another example. McConnell says: New Senator—in that case, Scott Brown—slow down work on major legislation, and Reid acceded.

We are calling on Senator McConnell to do the same thing today. Let's see if he does. We are calling on Senator McConnell to do just as Senator Reid did—to honor the wishes of the people of a State that has newly elected a Senator and to wait to move forward on the tax bill until Senator Jones arrives.

If Republicans insist on barreling ahead—and I understand the pressure is on them from their hard-right multi-billionaire paymasters—they will be pouring gasoline on the fire. Their tax bill—written in back rooms, rushed through this Chamber with such recklessness—which gives enormous breaks to the wealthy and corporations while it raises taxes on millions, many of them in the middle class, is being roundly rejected by the American people. Poll after poll shows by ratios equal to, a little less than, or a little more than two to one that the American people reject this bill. They know what is in it. They don't know all of the details, but they know it favors the wealthy and powerful over them, over the middle class. They know that, even if they are getting a small tax break, the vast majority of the tax breaks go to the wealthiest and the most powerful, and they don't like it. Above all, they know this tax bill will clobber the suburbs, drastically cutting back on the State and local deductions and other deductions they cut back on, which will be a gut punch to millions of middle-class and upper middle-class Americans who live in the suburbs. They are the very same people who are turning away from President Trump, who helped to propel Doug Jones to victory last night, and who helped to propel Mr. Northam to be Governor of Virginia when his opponent Gillespie was calling for a \$10,000 tax break for the middle class.

The longer this bill sits behind closed doors, the worse it is getting. Rather than improving it for the middle class, they are cutting the rate further on the wealthiest of Americans, according to all reports—to reduce the top rate another 2.5 percent, only going to people who make over \$300,000 a year, while raising taxes on the middle class. What is going on in the heads of our Republican colleagues? Why would they do something that seems so wrong for America and so against what the American people want? We know why. The Koch brothers and the Club for Growth, funded largely by billionaires and millionaires, and all these other groups are fanatic: Just cut taxes on the rich.

I don't even hear them arguing for helping the middle class, except in TV ads that are deceptive, in my judgment. But they are doing it for that

reason. Our Republican colleagues, by trying to appease these very wealthy people—a small number of greedy people—are writing their political doom, in my opinion.

The longer this bill sits behind closed doors, the worse it is getting. It is not improving things for the middle class. It is making them worse. Instead of learning from their mistakes, instead of heeding one of the lessons of the election last night, Republicans are doubling down on helping the wealthy and powerful and doing nothing for, if not harming, the middle class.

In 2010 on the floor of the Senate, Leader MCCONNELL said:

We need to move in a new direction—a dramatically new direction. That is the message of Virginia. That is the message of New Jersey. That is the message of Massachusetts.

You could replace Massachusetts with Alabama and say the exact same thing today. In sum, on process, on policy, and on politics, pausing this tax bill and going back to the drawing board is the right thing for Republicans to do. I hope, for the sake of this country, they will do just that.

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

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

NET NEUTRALITY

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, today we are closing in on a critical decision that will have a lasting impact on the innovation-driven economy of the United States. The Chairman of the FCC has decided to repeal a critical consumer protection known as net neutrality. This is a wrongheaded move. It is misguided. It is being driven by big cable interests that want to continue to gouge consumers and charge them more, making sure that consumers either pay or have their internet lines slowed down.

This decision turns the success of what has been an essential 21st-century innovation over to those in big corporations, instead of making sure that Main Street innovators continue to do what they do best. I don't think the American people want cable companies to be the gatekeeper on the internet. They want to have the FCC continue to play a role in making sure that an open internet is there for all, so that small businesses, entrepreneurs, and innovators can continue to build on the success of communicating with their consumers and their business partners without having artificially slowed-down lines.

Who would this impact if the FCC moves forward?

You could say that seniors would be impacted with regard to receiving their telehealth medicine and that students would be impacted in the slowing down

of their education. Families who access educational tools for their children could also see charges, and the open highway that has been so important in making sure that new internet businesses are started could be impacted.

The No. 1 reason we have to fight this decision—making sure that we do everything we can to stop the FCC from implementing this rule and giving consumers the protection of net neutrality—is that it will harm our internet economy. Last summer we had a townhall meeting about this, where I heard from many of my constituents. I then sent in many business cases to Chairman Pai so that he would understand why this impacts us so much.

Let's make sure that we understand what is happening. The FCC had rules that had prevented companies from throttling, or blocking, and it had paved the way for many great successes. In the United States, we have Fortune 500 companies and a tech industry that is responsible for 7 percent of our Nation's GDP and 6.9 million jobs in the United States of America.

Why would you change the rules now? Why would you leave after having made sure critical protections were in place and, instead, replace them with the ability for certain companies—cable, specifically—to wreak havoc on this economy?

Thirteen percent of Washington State's economy depends on a healthy internet sector. The internet economy for our State supports 250,000 jobs, and at a time when the Nation has not had enough wage growth, these tech jobs have been a bedrock for the middle class.

Chairman Pai is clearly not focused on the 250,000 jobs and the 13 percent of our State's economy. Just this past weekend, I and my colleague, Congresswoman DELBENE, met with many of these small businesses. Their message was loud and clear: Please stop Chairman Pai from ruining the internet by taking away key protections that make sure our businesses run successfully.

Chairman Pai is abdicating his role. He is abandoning the consumers whom he has sworn an oath to serve, and he is turning his back on innovators. He has really changed the direction for us and our innovation economy. I know that he thinks this is a light touch, but I guarantee you that it is a "no touch" regulation. What we need is to make sure that these companies do not artificially charge consumers, small businesses, and Main Street more for what they already are doing now and doing successfully. Obviously, an open internet rule and the rules that we are living under now have fueled an innovation economy. Every business plan of every startup relies on the company's ability to be able to contact its consumers.

With this much of our economy at stake, let's not continue to make mistakes. Let's continue to fight here in the Senate and make sure that we stop

Chairman Pai and the FCC from having the resources to implement this rule. It is so important now that we continue to fight for small businesses, for Main Street entrepreneurs, and for the innovation economy.

We deserve to have an open internet. As the small businesses and innovators just said to me this past weekend in Seattle, this is really like siding with the big companies and saying that they are going to make all of the decisions, that they are the ones that are going to be in control. They are not going to be for competition, and they are not going to be for this level of innovation. They are going to slow down what is one of the best parts of our economy.

I hope that our colleagues will join the fight and stop the FCC, in any manner possible, from implementing what is, literally, a very, very anti-competitive strategy and one that is very, very focused on big corporations, instead of the innovation economy of the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I thank all of my colleagues, led by Senator CANTWELL, for joining me on the floor this afternoon.

We are speaking on behalf of millions of our constituents and of the tens of millions of Americans who support a free and open internet. I am proud to come to the floor to discuss an issue of national importance to both our economy and our democracy—net neutrality.

Now, a lot of people have recently stopped and asked me: What exactly is net neutrality?

The technical answer is that network neutrality, or net neutrality, is the principle that internet service providers—you know their names: Verizon, AT&T, Charter, Comcast—cannot discriminate against content providers, against websites. They are the people to whom you pay by check each month and who make sure that you have broadband service. You know who they are. The simpler explanation is this: No one owns the internet. Everyone can use the internet. Anyone can improve the internet.

Yet that will not be the case if the Trump administration and Ajit Pai, the Chairman, and Republicans have their way. They want to get rid of the Federal Communications Commission's net neutrality rules so that the ISPs, the internet service providers, can indiscriminately charge more for internet fast lanes, slow down websites, block websites, make it harder—and, maybe, even impossible—for inventors, entrepreneurs, and small businesses—the lifeblood of the American economy—to connect to the internet.

That is why we are here this afternoon on the floor, and it is why supporters of a free and open internet are vigorously opposed to this politically craven attempt to weaken the principle of net neutrality that has allowed the internet to flourish.