

been the hallmark of American society, something they don't have in Russia. Just think, an additional half a million comments were filed from Russian email addresses. This is troubling because, in America, the public comment process matters. It is one of the few opportunities Americans have to weigh in directly with the FCC. That is why I joined several of my colleagues in calling on Chairman Pai to delay the vote until the FCC fully investigated these fake and foreign comments. Despite our calls, the FCC is still moving ahead with its vote. Despite 23 million comments, they are still moving ahead with their vote.

Under Chairman Pai's plan, the FCC gives internet service providers the ability to significantly change consumers' experience online. Internet service providers may soon be able to block, slow, and prioritize web traffic for their own financial gain, not for the average citizens' gain but for their gain. This means, internet service providers could begin sorting online traffic into fast or slow lanes and charging consumers extra for high-speed broadband. They would also be able to slow consumers' connections once they have hit a certain data limit or if they are viewing content from a competitor, and internet service providers may even block content they don't want their subscribers to access. So much for an open internet.

The only protections maintained under the proposed order are requirements for service providers to disclose their internet traffic policies. However, for consumers with only one choice for internet service, like many in my State and like many in rural areas, there is no real opportunity to comparison shop or find a new provider if they are unhappy with their service. This means that even though consumers may be aware that their internet service provider is blocking or slowing their connection, they actually don't have a choice so what does that information matter to them anyway? This proposal will harm consumers, particularly in rural areas. It will limit competition, and it will hurt small business, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

What I have seen around this place is that everyone is talking about rural broadband. They want to expand broadband. I want to expand broadband. Well, you can expand broadband all you want, but it is not going to matter if people aren't able to afford to access it.

A truly open internet encourages economic growth and provides opportunities for businesses to reach new markets, drive innovation, and create jobs. Small businesses remain engines of job creation, and net neutrality levels the playing field, allowing small companies to compete with more established brands. That is what America is about—allowing more innovation and small companies to come up and compete.

Unfortunately, for small businesses and startups across the country, the net neutrality repeal will mean new barriers when competing online. Without unrestricted access to the internet, entrepreneurs may be forced to pay for equal footing to compete online rather than focus on expanding their business. Small businesses unable to pay for access to faster internet service may soon find themselves struggling to compete from the slow lane, not the fast lane. This proposal will hurt the very people creating jobs and keeping our economy competitive.

As a strong supporter of a free and open internet, it is clear that repealing net neutrality is a step in the wrong direction. We are facing an increasingly global and interconnected economy, and it is critical that the internet remain a hub of entrepreneurship, creativity, and fair competition.

The fight to protect net neutrality is far from over, and we need to keep the pressure on. We have seen merger after merger after merger. We have seen consolidated businesses, bigger and bigger and bigger. So now what is the next step here? To limit net neutrality to make it harder for the small guys, for the ones who are trying to get into the market to compete. It is not just an isolated philosophy; it is actually part of a larger philosophy, which means that smaller companies, that individuals are going to have a hard time getting into the market and getting free access like the big guys.

That is why we ask Chairman Pai to reconsider this vote on Thursday and to come up with a new policy that doesn't hurt the people of America.

It is no surprise today that the poll I saw said the vast majority of Americans don't favor getting rid of net neutrality, and in fact it showed the vast majority of Republicans don't favor getting rid of net neutrality. So we ask Chairman Pai, who was appointed chairman by a Republican President, to reconsider this decision.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

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

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, we are in the middle of a historically important debate here in Washington. Republicans have hatched a partisan proposal behind closed doors that would shovel a trillion dollars in tax giveaways to giant corporations and the wealthy while undermining the healthcare and raising taxes for millions of middle-class families. If it passes, it could affect the lives of every single American for an entire generation.

Now, last night, the people of Alabama elected a new Senator to represent them here in Washington. So now Republicans who control the Senate face a choice. Will they allow Senator-elect Doug Jones to take his seat among his colleagues before a final vote on their tax plan?

We actually know something about that kind of choice in my home State of Massachusetts. On January 19, 2010, Massachusetts elected a new Senator to represent them here in Washington. The result was just as shocking to Democrats as last night's result was to Republicans. It also came when we were in the middle of another historically important policy debate here in Washington—healthcare. A lot of people thought Democrats should ram through the final version of their bill in Congress before Brown could be seated.

Now, I could stand here and read you quote after quote after quote from Republicans, who now control the Senate, talking about how unfair that would be, how corrupt that would be, and how anti-democratic that would be. I could go on and on about how today's Senate majority leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, said this would be gamesmanship, but I am going to talk about what Democrats actually did.

Democrats rejected the idea of ramming through the bill before Brown could take his seat in the Senate. Almost immediately, Jim Webb, a Democratic Senator from Virginia, called for a suspension of any healthcare vote until after Brown arrived. The day after the Massachusetts election, the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, said publicly: "We're going to wait until the new Senator arrives until we do anything more on health care."

Massachusetts Democratic Senator John Kerry held a joint press conference with Republican Scott Brown that same week, where he said:

Seating Scott Brown as expeditiously as possible is important. We want to respect the election results. And nobody wants to delay this process.

President Obama, whose entire healthcare agenda was on the line, said this:

Here's one thing I know and I just want to make sure that this is off the table: The Senate certainly shouldn't try to jam anything through until Scott Brown is seated. People in Massachusetts spoke. He's got to be part of that process.

Now, this wasn't an easy decision. Waiting for Brown slowed down the adoption of healthcare for 2 additional months. More importantly, it meant Democrats lost their filibuster-proof majority and, as a consequence, the final bill couldn't achieve nearly as much as Democrats had hoped for, but we did it anyway.

We did it because democracy matters, even when it means it might slow down a President's agenda. Democracy matters, even when a Senate seat held for decades by a liberal lion is taken over by a conservative. Democracy matters, especially when it is inconvenient.

If we are honest, we know that there hasn't been a lot of democracy around this tax bill. This is a bill that was written and rewritten in the dead of night, behind closed doors. It is filled with errors and unintended consequences. It is animated by a rotten

wealth transfer from millions of hard-working Americans to a handful of corporations and billionaires.

But up until now, we have at least respected the principle that each State gets to pick its Senators, and those Senators get to vote for or against the final product. This afternoon, we are being told that Republicans have a final tax deal. Nobody has seen it, but we could be voting on it in the next couple of days. There is no reason to ram through that kind of massive restructuring of our economic system before Alabama gets its new Senator unless Republicans are concerned that their deal won't withstand a couple of more weeks of public scrutiny.

The election of Doug Jones will not change which party controls the Senate. The election of Doug Jones will not give him or Democrats the power to block the tax bill or any other piece of legislation, but it will respect the people of Alabama and their choice. It should happen before any more tax votes take place in the Senate.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. President, almost 60 years ago, America entered the space age. We pushed the bounds of human knowledge to do, see, and create things that fundamentally changed the way we live our lives. The government was right smack at the center of all of it, dedicating resources and manpower to explorations of science, medicine, engineering, and technology. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, was a product of that commitment, and it was there at DARPA that a bunch of government and government-funded researchers created the internet.

In the intervening decades, what started in that government Agency provided the building blocks for what we experience as the internet today. Creative minds in government, at colleges and universities, in businesses, and at homes and garages all across the country toyed and tinkered and pushed us into the digital age.

Today, internet use is nearly universal. Although internet access remains limited in many rural and low-income areas, students of all ages go online to access educational tools and conduct research for many school assignments. Entrepreneurs and small businesses sell goods and transact business online. Families come together to watch their favorite movies or shows. The internet and broadband services have become an important part of our lives.

Government is just as important now as it was back when the internet was created. By enforcing and implementing America's communications laws and rules, the Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, plays a critical role in making sure that the internet remains fair and open.

In 2015, the FCC enshrined that commitment in an open internet order, establishing net neutrality rules—strong, public interest rules that prevented big

companies from deciding how or when we use the internet, rules that have the overwhelming support of the vast majority of Americans, Republican or Democrat.

But big internet companies don't want the FCC to work in the public interest; they want the internet to work for them. Long before the FCC passed net neutrality rules, those giants were working to establish control over the open internet. After net neutrality rules were passed, they stepped up their attack, deploying armies of lobbyists and lawyers and investing massive amounts of money to bury net neutrality rules.

Now they have the champagne chilled and ready to pop open. They have a President and a GOP-controlled Congress that is more interested in stuffing the pockets of the rich and powerful than taking care of the workers, small businesses and entrepreneurs, students, children, the sick, the elderly, and just about everybody else. President Trump's choice to lead the FCC, Ajit Pai, is dedicated to transforming the FCC from an agency that works in the public interest into a big business giveaway group.

Pai has been a vocal opponent of net neutrality rules for a very long time. After President Trump won the election, Pai gleefully declared that net neutrality's days were numbered. Pai claims that nondiscrimination rules harm giant internet companies by making it more difficult for them to create new and better products. He thinks that if these giants can discriminate against small businesses or individuals, then these giants can pick who gets the fast lane into your television set and who is stuck off on the dirt roads. If these giants can dictate which startups get a foothold and which ones are left on the ground, then the giants will be better off. Of course, he is right—the giants will be better off, but everyone else will be a lot worse off.

Chairman Pai is so committed to these internet giants that he is willing to rewrite the Federal rules in order to help them out. He is even willing to rewrite the rules so State and local governments won't be allowed to pass any consumer protection laws to protect their own citizens. Chairman Pai's notion of a fair and open internet is one that works for the highest bidder and it just leaves everyone else behind.

Tomorrow, the FCC will vote on whether to eliminate the protections that ensure that the internet remains fair and open to all Americans—protections that the vast majority of Americans support. Pai has barrelled full speed ahead despite disturbing reports that potentially hundreds of thousands of comments submitted during the public comment period were fake, and he has ignored the FCC's responsibility to turn over documents of consumer complaints about discriminatory behavior by internet providers.

If the FCC eliminates net neutrality protections, giant internet companies

will pop open those champagne bottles. They will have the power to block access, to filter content, to charge more—three powerful ways that they will pick the next round of America's winners and losers. That is not the way it should work in America. The internet doesn't belong to big internet companies; it belongs to all of us, and all of us should be part of this fight.

Net neutrality matters. For the entrepreneur working around the clock on a shoestring budget to build an invention that can change the world, net neutrality matters. For the small family business that depends on online customers to keep its lights on and its doors open, net neutrality matters. For the blog writer or local journalist who works each day to bring us important news about our communities, our government, and our world, net neutrality matters. For every American who uses the internet for any reason, net neutrality matters.

Ingenuity is in America's DNA. It is that spirit of curiosity and adventure that has put us at the forefront of the search for what is next. Government works best when it makes sure everyone has equal access to the resources that make that possible.

In Massachusetts, Free Press, the Massachusetts Chapter of the ACLU, Fight for the Future, and countless other groups have led the fight to defend net neutrality and help citizens make their voices heard.

I urge every American to speak out about why net neutrality matters. I urge the FCC to abandon its plan to kill net neutrality rules, and I ask the FCC to defend an internet that is fair and open to all.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I introduced the Senate's first strong net neutrality bill back in 2006. I rise today to give my strongest possible condemnation of what the Federal Communications Commission's head, Mr. Pai, is seeking to do, which is to roll back protections that ensure a truly free and open internet for our people.

This is a handout. It is a holiday gift to a collection of giant internet companies to increase their profits at the expense of the consumer.

Before I actually begin my remarks, I see Senator FRANKEN is on the floor, as well. I would like the public to know how important his leadership has been on these issues. He and I have partnered on these issues ever since he came to the Senate. He was on the key committee, the Judiciary Committee. He has been a go-to figure in a key spot on this issue.

I want to continue this discussion after Senator WARREN's terrific presentation. I know my colleague is going to speak on this, as well.

I want the public to know that Senator FRANKEN has made a big difference for the consumer on these issues. Those