raised by his widowed mother, who waited tables at the local truck stop. She would leave the trailer for her 6 a.m. shift before Justice Willett even woke up in the morning. He would wake himself up, get fed, dressed, and then catch the bus to a neighboring town to go to school.

Justice Willett was the first person in his family to even finish high school, let alone go to college and then to law school. He has four degrees. He got his bachelor's from Baylor with a triple major in economics, finance, and public administration. He then received a master's degree in political science, a law degree, and an LLM degree from Duke.

After law school, he clerked on the Fifth Circuit—the court on which he will soon be serving—for Judge Jerre Williams. Then, after 2½ years at a large law firm, he decided to dedicate his career to public service. He worked for Gov. George W. Bush in Texas and then for President Bush in DC. He and I worked closely together in that regard. After his time in DC, he happily returned to the great State of Texas to serve as the deputy attorney general for legal counsel. Don served alongside me, working under Greg Abbott, then the attorney general. We had offices just down the hall from each other.

In 2005, he was appointed by Gov. Rick Perry to serve as an associate justice on the Texas Supreme Court, and he was reelected by the people of Texas to that court in 2006 and again in 2012.

I can't tell you how proud I am to see Justice Willett confirmed as a judge on the Fifth Circuit and to see his lifetime of service continue in this new arena.

Jim Ho took a different path to the Fifth Circuit, but his story is just as powerful as an example of the American dream.

Jim was born in Taipei, Taiwan. He immigrated to the United States with his family when he was just 1 year old. For the first few years of his life, his family lived with relatives in Queens, NY. Jim learned English watching Sesame Street. His family then moved to Southern California, where he attended high school and then went on to college at Stanford University.

In 1996, Jim enrolled at the University of Chicago Law School, where he graduated with high honors in 1999. He then moved to Texas for the first time in his life, accepting a clerkship in Houston with Judge Jerry Smith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit—again, the same court on which he is preparing to serve. It was during the end of his clerkship in Houston that he started dating his law school classmate, now his wife Allyson, a Houston native and another dear friend of mine.

In 2000, Jim moved to Washington, DC, to join the law firm of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher. In 2001, he joined the U.S. Department of Justice as a Special Assistant to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, working under now-U.S. Labor Secretary Alex Acosta. Later that year, he joined the Department's Office of Legal Counsel. After 2 years at OLC, he came here to the Senate, where he served as the first chief counsel of my colleague, the senior Senator from Texas, JOHN CORNYN. After 2 years as Senator CORNYN's chief counsel, Jim went to clerk at the Supreme Court for Justice Clarence Thomas.

At the end of the clerkship, Jim and Allyson finally fulfilled their dream of going back to Texas, where Jim rejoined the law firm of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher in Dallas.

Then, in 2008, my tenure as solicitor general of Texas was coming to a close. Attorney General Abbott had told me that if I were going to leave, I would have to find my successor. I picked up the phone and called my longtime friend, Jim Ho. I talked to Jim about coming to succeed me as solicitor general. Jim agreed to take on the job and did a remarkable job as the chief appellate lawyer for the State of Texas, representing Texas before the U.S. Supreme Court and all the State and Federal appellate courts.

Jim served as solicitor general from April 2008 until December 2010, when he returned to Dallas and once again rejoined Gibson Dunn as a partner. A few years later, he became cochair of the firm's appellate and constitutional law practice group. Jim has done many extraordinary things, but nothing more so than marrying his wife Allyson, who is, like Jim, a Supreme Court advocate and one of the most talented constitutional lawyers in the country.

Allyson is my former law partner. When I left the job of solicitor general and went to the Morgan Lewis law firm, I promptly recruited Allyson to come lead the Supreme Court practice with me. I am proud to say that over the past 5 years, Jim's wife Allyson has argued more business cases before the U.S. Supreme Court than any lawyer in Texas.

Jim has become a pillar of the legal community in Texas, and the outpouring of support he has received demonstrates that. To take just one example, I have a letter from Ron Kirk, the former mayor of Dallas and a former member of President Obama's Cabinet and, incidentally, the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate who Senator CORNYN defeated in 2002. By any measure, he is a strong and prominent Democrat in the State of Texas. Mr. Kirk writes:

> The last time Texans got to fill a seat on the Fifth Circuit, it was Judge Gregg Costa, who this body confirmed by a well-deserved unanimous vote. As a lifelong Democrat and devoted member of the Obama cabinet, I ask you to give Jim Ho the same unanimous consent.

I agree, and I hope our Democratic friends in this body will set aside the partisan rancor that has so characterized this year and will listen to the words of one of their own, a member of Obama's Cabinet, and a prominent Democrat from Texas, urging that Jim Ho be confirmed unanimously.

Sadly, Senate Democrats insisted on and provided a party-line vote in the Judiciary Committee. It is my hope that this full body will demonstrate more wisdom and less partisan animosity than the Judiciary Committee Democrats demonstrated.

Both Jim and Don, I am convinced, will make excellent judges on the Fifth Circuit. They are brilliant. They are principled. They are humble men of deep character. They love their families. They are wonderful fathers. I am confident that not only will they faithfully follow the law in the court of appeals, but I predict Jim Ho and Don Willett will become judicial superstars. They will become jurists to which other Federal judges across the country look. Their opinions will be cited heavily. They will be followed in other courts of appeals. Their careful and meticulous analysis and their fidelity to the law will be held up as exemplars for judges across the country to follow. That is a great accomplishment for the Federal judiciary, a great accomplishment for the Senate, and a great week for the State of Texas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Wyoming.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the tax relief and tax reduction legislation that the conference committee is currently working on. To me and to all Americans, this is a very important piece of legislation. I think it is going to get even better as the House and the Senate work to hammer out the differences to help lower the tax rates for American families.

When you look at this legislation, there are so many policies that will help to make America's economy grow. Families across the country will get a tax break. It is what they need. It is what they have been looking for, for a long time. Main Street businesses will also get a tax break. When people get a raise like that, they invest in their families, and they invest in their communities. They create jobs. Wages go up. The economy grows, and our Nation gets stronger.

You don't have to take my word for it. Respected mainstream economists are saying exactly the same thing. They agree that our economy needs to grow. They agree that the legislation we are working on—which passed the Senate, passed the House, and is being joined together—will deliver the growth that our Nation needs.

In October the Council of Economic Advisers put out a report looking at some of the ideas for tax relief. This is a group that advises the President on economic issues. Their report found that the tax plan, like the one Republicans wrote, will grow the economy between 3 percent and 5 percent. That is real growth. It is strong growth, and it is good news for America.

There was another study that came out in October. That was by a group of economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University. They did their own calculations and used their own numbers, and they found the exact same good news for the American economy. Just like the other report, this one said that the Republican tax plan would grow the economy by between 3 percent and 5 percent.

A third study was released in November. It was by the Tax Foundation. Again, it is a respected group of economists who study this kind of issue for a living. They looked specifically at the legislation as it was introduced in the Senate Finance Committee and, then, passing the Senate. This group found that the plan would increase the size of the economy by 3.7 percent. That is the same range, between 3 and 5 percent, but more specifically, 3.7 percent.

Then, there was a fourth analysis by one more group of nine respected independent economists. This group wrote about their conclusions in a letter to the Treasury Secretary on November 26. They wrote that they expect this tax relief plan to boost the economy by 3 percent over the next 10 years.

We have four different entities, four different estimates, four different groups of prominent economists. They looked at the tax relief plan. They looked at it in different ways and used different analyses, and they all found that it would grow the American economy by very similar amounts, all by at least 3 percent.

There was one other study that some people have been talking about. This was an estimate by a group called the Joint Committee on Taxation. This group predicts that growth under the Republican plan will increase, but by just 0.8 percent over those next 10 years. That works out, roughly, to eight one-hundredths of 1 percent a year. All of these other groups say at least 3 percent, maybe 5 percent, and this other group says less than 1 percent over a decade. It is hard to believe.

Why is this one group, which is being quoted often by the Democrats, so far out of line, out of the mainstream, with what other economists are saying? The reason they reached such a different conclusion is that they did their analysis very differently from all the other groups. This committee combines a few different economic models into their estimate. That is reasonable. When we look closely at the models they combined, we found that they counted the most pessimistic models much more heavily than they did the more realistic models. So, of course, they are going to come up with an overly pessimistic conclusion.

I think it can be useful to take these more negative views into account. Nobody thinks we should just pick from the rosiest scenario or base our policies on one prediction. That is not what is happening here. We have four different groups of economists that predict strong economic growth of at least 3 percent. The one outlier is much more pessimistic, much more cautious.

Another thing to remember is that even this very cautious estimate says that the economy will get bigger because of the Republican plan than if we did nothing at all. Even the pessimistic group is saying: Oh, yes, the economy will grow under the Republican plan. They say it will reduce deficits by an additional $400 billion over the next 10 years.

I think we are going to do a whole lot better than that because our economy is going to grow much faster. Under President Obama and Washington Democrats, we had 8 years of policies that held back our economy and caused it to grow at a very tepid, slow pace. Economists looked at these policies, and they said that if things continue on that path, we can expect the economy to grow by about the 1.8 percent we have been seeing through the Obama administration.

With Republicans setting the agenda, those policies are history and so is this slow economic growth that had been created during the Obama years. Look what just happened in the last two economic quarters of this year. Over these 6 months, our economy grew at a pace of more than 3 percent. The economy has created more than 2 million jobs since President Trump was elected a little over a year ago. The economy is responding—responding to policies that Republicans have been talking about and to what we have been doing in terms of eliminating so many punishing, burdensome, expensive regulations that have caused such a drag on our economy.

When we pass legislation like this tax relief act, it will give businesses confidence that we are keeping our promises. It gives them confidence that they can keep hiring, keep investing, and keep creating more jobs.

Take a look at the fact that there are 2 million more new jobs since election day of last year. Someone said: Oh, no, you have to wait until Inauguration Day to start counting. I disagree. I will tell you that in my home State of Wyoming, on election night, when the results were in and it was known that Donald Trump had been elected President of the United States, there was immediate optimism, immediate confidence, and an immediate positive spring in people's steps. The decision at that point by the American electorate said: Yes, it is time for this economy to take off. And it has.

When someone comes out with an estimate about economic growth and they don't take into account all of these different things, I think, maybe, they are living in the past, when they were looking at an economic growth model of 1.8 percent. I think, maybe, they got so used to the anemic growth we had in the Obama years that they are still expecting that to continue into the future. They are not taking into account that things are different now, that Republicans are passing our economic plans, and that the burdensome regulations and the redtape has been cut. They are not taking into account that President Trump is in the White House.

Those things make a very big difference when it comes to sustaining this progress that we have seen over the past year. Four out of five studies agree that the Republican tax plan will deliver the kind of economic growth that the American people want and the American economy needs—a strong, healthy, and growing economy.

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. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. 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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am willing to wager that the term ''net neutrality'' has no meaning to many Americans. It is a term that refers to a practice and a set of rules that are likely a total mystery to the vast majority of the people who are affected by them. As often happens in Washington, DC, the terms of art are highly technical and obtuse and obscure, but the effects of these rules matter to almost every American, openly, and they will be of increasing importance to Americans if the current net neutrality rules are reversed tomorrow.

That is why I am here. The Federal Communications Commission, under the leadership of its new Chairman, Ajit Pai, has a reckless and needless plan to repeal those rules that are vital to a level playing field and fair access to consumers of the internet content that they value and need. To put it very simply, Chairman Pai's plan would disastrously disadvantage small businesses. It would harm our economy. It would threaten the internet's incredible success, including innovation. It would harm consumers by giving them higher prices and possibly lower speeds in accessing what they want from the internet.

The background here is pretty simple. In 2015, the FCC adopted its open internet order to preserve the open nature of the internet. The internet has thrived on its openness. That is, in a sense, its spirit and its great advantage. It is uniquely American in that way—open and accessible.

The order created three very bright line rules: no blocking, no throttling, no paid prioritization. Nobody could stop access or block it. Nobody could diminish the availability—no throttling and no paid authorization. That is to say that nobody is to get a benefit from faster speeds simply because he is paying more. Those rules really put the internet at stake—the vitality and innovative energy is at stake here.

Blocked sites, slower speeds, fast lanes and slow lanes, and more fees will