

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 rosier 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

be our future on the internet if these rules are revoked, as Chairman Pai says they will be tomorrow. Some of today's internet service providers will benefit. They already have clear conflicts of interest. They own content companies. They want their customers to spend more time on their content. Comcast, for example, owns the media giant NBCUniversal. Verizon owns Yahoo and AOL.

We are having a hearing this afternoon that involves Comcast and NBCUniversal, and I am deeply troubled by the expiration of the conditions that have been put on the merger. Those conditions help to protect competition and consumers. They have a questionable effect in that purpose, but even the modest comfort or protection they provide will completely evaporate as the conditions expire. So I will ask today that there be an investigation by the Department of Justice to sustain and continue those conditions and ask that the court that approved them actually extend them to meet the needs of competition and consumers.

Our current net neutrality rules prevent companies from becoming gatekeepers, toll takers, in a way that favors their own content. If they are the gatekeepers and the toll takers, they are the ones who block, and they are the ones who collect the fees. If they have the ability to pick and choose between the content providers that belong to their competitors or the content providers that are independent, they are going to choose their own content providers. They are going to favor their own over the others. Gutting the net neutrality rules, in effect, gives them free rein to favor their own content and their own political views.

If the internet service providers are able to block content or charge higher fees for access, eventually the ones who will suffer will be the consumers. They will pay higher prices, or the content will be slowed in reaching them. Make no mistake. Companies that are willing to pay the toll for fast lanes will transfer those costs to consumers. They are not going to just absorb the additional expense. The folks who have no idea what the term "net neutrality" means—who may have never heard it—are the ones who are going to pay the freight. They are going to be the ones who suffer the consequences.

These rules are for a reason. They were not simply picked out of the air. They are not some product of some overactive regulatory imagination. They have meaning and consequence for ordinary people who use the internet, which is one of the economic giants of our generation. We are, in effect, throttling, blocking, and raising prices for the people who depend on innovation and access and openness.

The right thing for Chairman Pai to do is to cancel tomorrow's party-line vote and abandon this misguided plan to destroy the free and open internet. He is acting, in essence, at the behest of the economic giants—the cable com-

panies—that stand to benefit because they will raise prices and favor their own content.

No matter what he decides, the fight is only really beginning. We will no doubt bring legislation to the U.S. Senate—not an easy task to pass it. Any final action in the FCC unquestionably, undoubtedly, will be challenged in the courts. I am actually hopeful that we can avoid litigation. Litigation is always a last resort. But there will be litigation because the 2015 open internet order was actually based on 10 years of evidence in a fact-based docket. Again, it was not pulled out of the air; it was based on factfinding and thought and redrafting that then, in fact, resulted in litigation that was upheld in the courts. In fact, in the court of appeals, it was judged to be legal and rationally rooted in real fact. That is the internet order that should be sustained.

I hope that Chairman Pai will postpone this misguided plan. I hope that he will abandon it. There is no need to recklessly repeal the net neutrality rules without demonstrating a significant and substantial change in factual circumstances. That is what is required statutorily—a significant and substantial change in factual circumstances to justify revoking and repealing a rule that was based on circumstance and fact.

In the meantime, millions of Americans have already given their opinions. They have weighed in. They have said to the FCC: Stop playing with the internet in a way that favors the big guys—the cable companies—the ones who will block or throttle and raise prices.

We should not allow Chairman Pai to silence their comments, to ignore them, or disregard them.

The FCC has a responsibility here. It is a public trust. It matters to the millions of Americans who have never heard and will probably never hear that term "net neutrality" and who will never understand what its consequences are until they see them personally, up close, firsthand—higher prices, blocking, throttling. That is the evil we can and must avoid.

Thank you.

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

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

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ART AND NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES FUNDING

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the vital importance of the connection between the arts, education, and progress.

I am from a little town in Delaware named Hockessin. Hockessin was not

much when I grew up there. We had about 1,500 people, some dairy farms and mushroom farms. Over the last 40 years, it has gradually developed.

A not much widely noted big day happened back in 1994 in Hockessin, DE, when one of America's greatest jazz performers, Cab Calloway, passed away in the little town of Hockessin, DE. Cab Calloway gave his name to a remarkable performing arts school. This is a school that 25 years ago was created dedicated to the idea that if you want to elevate learning, if you want to strengthen education, you should make sure you have a robust range of opportunities to engage with the arts.

I thought I would use that as an example today to talk for a few minutes about why what we do here can be important across our whole country and why a connection between the arts and education can make a lasting difference for families all across our country.

Back in 1965, when I was just 2 years old, a group of Senators, Republican and Democratic, came together to create two things—the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. These two federally funded national programs are absolutely critical educational, economic, and cultural drivers that have impacted thousands of communities across the United States.

Why is this a subject of any contention or discussion here? Well, because unfortunately our President's budget this year proposed to eliminate funding for both of these organizations—both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities—proposed to be removed, zeroed out, cancelled, despite their almost more than 50-year record of successful impact and service across the country.

In my little State of Delaware, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities funded all sorts of valuable programs with significant impacts. Last year, I invited the head of the National Endowment for the Arts to come and visit us in Delaware and to pull together the whole range of folks who received some grants from them—\$681,000 last year. It is about 17 percent of all the funding for arts in my State. It helped support 100 grants to nonprofits all up and down our State.

I will give a few examples. The Grand Opera House has a summer in the park series because of the National Endowment for the Arts. The University of Delaware Community Music School holds a musical theater camp every summer, serving dozens of kids—about 80 kids. The Christina Cultural Arts Center in downtown Wilmington brings vibrant, cutting-edge arts programming to a neighborhood that might not otherwise enjoy it. The Creative Vision Factory provides individuals with behavioral health disorders an opportunity for self-expression, empowerment, and recovery through the arts. I

can give many more examples, but these are four of the hundreds.

The National Endowment for the Humanities gives a comparable number of grants and supports programs up and down our State. I will mention one—art conservation at Winterthur. Winterthur, which is a magnificent museum and collection of the American arts, has a partnership with museums in places around the world—from Haiti, to Iraq, to Syria—where, because of conflict, critical pieces of cultural history have been at risk of being lost. Because of these NEH grants to Winterthur, those partnerships have been strengthened.

We have been blessed to have in my friend Governor Jack Markell and his wife Carla, over the last 8 years, strong, longstanding support for the arts in our State. We have lots of leading individuals in our State. Tatiana Copeland, for example, helped build the Queen Theater and helped support the Delaware Symphony Orchestra. They work in partnership with the Delaware Division of the Arts. A gentleman named Paul Weagraff is now the executive director of the Delaware Division of the Arts under the new administration of Governor Carney.

I am hopeful that we here in the Senate can sustain bipartisan support for arts and humanities funding and that the young people of Delaware, our communities, and our families will continue to enjoy the blessings that these investments in creativity bring. How much are we talking about? It is about \$150 million—\$149.8 million, to be specific—this fiscal year for each of these two endowments. That is a tiny percentage of the total Federal budget. Now, \$150 million may sound like a lot, and \$680,000 of grants for my whole State of Delaware may sound like a lot, but across these two endowments for the arts and humanities, \$300 million in Federal money has a dramatic impact. It leverages private funding 9 to 1. In recent studies looking at the impact of the National Endowment for the Arts, they concluded that they were particularly focused and particularly effective and that where there is a leadership grant given by the NEA, it leverages \$9 more for every Federal dollar used.

I think Federal funding for the arts and humanities has to remain a priority. I think it is important that we embrace the model that the Cab Calloway School has championed in Delaware and across the country where educational excellence is shown by working together with the expressive and creative arts.

It was William Butler Yeats—a famous Irish poet—who once said that education is not the mere filling up of a pail, it is the lighting of a fire. If you want to ignite the aspirations, hopes, and dreams of young people, don't just engage them in trigonometry, biology, chemistry, and physics—although those subjects can be interesting, engaging, or challenging—light the fire of

their spirit with art, give their spirit room to soar, give them an opportunity to paint on the canvas of their lives, and give them the gift of artistic training and skills, and there is no limit to where they can go. That has been our experience in Delaware. That has been our experience across the country.

It is my hope that we will find a way on a bipartisan basis to continue to sustain investment in the humanities and the arts.

In 1960, President Kennedy said:

There is a connection, hard to explain logically but easy to feel, between achievement in public life and progress in the arts.

Citing three important periods in history, he said:

The age of Pericles was also the age of Phidias. The age of Lorenzo de Medici was also the age of Leonardo da Vinci. The age of Elizabeth was also the age of Shakespeare, and the new frontier for which I campaign in public life can also be a new frontier for American art.

It is important that we remember here that the modest amounts of Federal money we invest in the arts bear enormous positive, multiplied benefits to the people of our country and to our place in the world.

I am grateful for all who work in arts education, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work on a bipartisan basis to sustain our Federal investment in the arts and humanities.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

With 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.

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

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

HONORING NEBRASKA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST
THEIR LIVES IN COMBAT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to continue my tribute to Nebraska's heroes, the current generation of men and women who lost their lives defending our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of these Nebraskans has a special story to tell.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER CHRISTOPHER
ALLGAIER

Today, Mr. President, I recall the life and service of CWO Christopher Allgaier, a native of Omaha, NE.

Growing up, Chris lived a pretty typical life as a Nebraska boy. During high school, he played video games and went to movies with his friends. With his family, he was a frequent visitor to Big Fred's Pizza in Omaha; the regular cheese pizza was his go-to. On Friday nights, he was known to go watch fellow classmates at high school football games, and on Saturdays in the fall, he did what a lot of Nebraskans do—he would attend or watch Husker football games.

Along with his sister Sharon and brother Rob, Chris grew up in a Catholic household. His family attended St.

Robert Bellarmine Catholic Church in Omaha.

At Creighton Prep High School, Chris was a member of the Creighton Prep National Honor Society, National Spanish Honor Society, and the school science club. He was very dedicated to academics, and he graduated with the highest academic honors in 1991. During Chris's senior year at Creighton Prep, he became very interested in fixed-wing aircraft and flying.

After high school graduation, Chris continued his studies at another Jesuit institution, St. Louis University, where he continued his interest in aircraft by studying aeronautical administration.

Shortly after receiving his bachelor's degree, Chris enlisted in the U.S. Army. This surprised his family and friends. His father attributes Chris's decision to his son's sense of duty and interest in aeronautics. Chris graduated from basic combat training at Fort Jackson before attending his advanced individual training in aviation mechanics. The idea of Chris working in aviation mechanics always struck his father Bob as somewhat funny. Growing up, Chris didn't like getting his hands dirty or helping to change the oil in the family vehicles.

Due to his strong academic record and interest in aeronautics, Chris was persuaded to apply to Warrant Officer Candidate School. Chris liked the idea of becoming a warrant officer so he could specialize and become an expert in aviation. He graduated at the top of his class from Warrant Officer Candidate School and became a helicopter pilot.

While performing his duties in the Army, Chris also took classes at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He graduated with a master's degree in aeronautical science in 2001—the same year the September 11 terrorist attacks shook the lives of all Americans.

Chief Warrant Officer Allgaier deployed to South Korea for over a year before going to Afghanistan in 2003 and Iraq in 2005. While deployments are usually tough for any family, 2005 was especially difficult for the Allgaiers because Chris's mother Sally passed away.

In 2006, Chris was assigned to the 3rd General Support Aviation Battalion, 82nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division out of Fort Bragg, NC. The unit deployed to Afghanistan in 2007. He flew CH-47 Chinook helicopters in transport missions. During this time, Chris flew a lot of night operations. His father said that Chris would call him every couple of weeks between missions just to catch up. Those were phone calls that Bob always looked forward to receiving.

The Upper Sangin Valley in Helmand Province was the center of fighting in Afghanistan in 2007. A British newspaper called it "the deadliest area in Afghanistan."