

Committee should receive regular briefings that thoroughly address proposed reorganization plans and decisions.

Second, we need to know the details and timeline for reorganization. The Department must provide a clear timeline—something it has failed to do to date—and provide details about what it is planning.

While there are some parts of the reorganization that we find to be positive, such as improving information technology, I remain concerned that the reorganization may be marginalizing or eliminating critical bureaus and offices that help to inform U.S. foreign policy. I understand that many of these ideals may not come to fruition, but it is essential for us to receive details in a timely way so that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee can carry out its critical oversight function. Again, we are now in the eleventh month of this administration, and we don't yet know when they are going to be submitting their plans for reorganization, and we have not been kept adequately informed.

Third, I would mention filling senior vacancies. The Department must prioritize key senior vacancies and work with the White House to swiftly move forward qualified nominees. The significant vacancies for senior-level management and policy positions in such critical bureaus as Counterterrorism and Political-Military Affairs are deeply troubling. Approximately 30 countries still do not have named Ambassador nominees, including South Korea, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Despite claims that the Senate's slow pace is to blame for the lack of confirmed nominees, the fact is that the Foreign Relations Committee has promptly processed the vast majority of nominees, and only a handful are currently awaiting a Senate vote. We cannot confirm nominees who have not been nominated.

Finally, let me talk about the need to uphold the mission of the Department. The Department's mission statement must continue to reflect the values we hold as Americans. Proposed changes send a troubling signal about the administration's vision for the Department and its role in foreign policy. The promotion of democracy and respect for human rights around the world must remain a central part of the State Department's overall mission.

I agree that improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department is critical to our national security given the countless challenges we face as a nation. Reforms to information technology, human resources, and procurement systems are long overdue, and I support the efforts of the Department to streamline special envoys and special representative positions.

I hope, moving forward, the Department will consider Congress as a partner in these endeavors, as well as broader efforts to strengthen America's

diplomatic capabilities. However, if the Department continues down its current path, I can assure you that my colleagues and I will use every legislative option we have to address these concerns.

My goal is to ensure that the employees in the State Department have all the resources and support they require to complete their tasks and ensure that the United States remains a global diplomatic leader. I will do everything in my power to guarantee that this goal is accomplished.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. HASSAN. Thank you, Mr. President.

NET NEUTRALITY

I rise today to join my colleagues to oppose the Federal Communications Commission's planned vote tomorrow to dismantle net neutrality rules. As this proposal has been considered, I have been troubled by the impact this decision will have on consumers and small businesses, as well as by the process itself, which has been seriously flawed with regard to gaining public input on this critical issue.

Access to a free and open internet is at the forefront of the lives of nearly every American. Consumers, entrepreneurs, innovative small businesses, and, in turn, our Nation's economy, have all benefited from equal access to content on the internet, no matter the internet service provider. An open internet has been essential to civic engagement, social and economic mobility, and the fight to make progress for our underrepresented populations, just as we saw with the national Women's March at the beginning of this year, which was largely organized through online activism. An open internet is critical to our economy and our democracy, and net neutrality has guaranteed this equal access. But tomorrow's vote by the FCC would change all of that.

Under the plan from FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, the control of the internet experience will be taken from the consumer in Keene or the small business in Nashua and handed over to their internet service providers. Undoing net neutrality would give broadband providers the power to discriminate against certain web pages, applications, and streaming and video services by slowing them down, blocking them, or favoring certain services while charging more to access others. This is particularly disturbing at a time when many consumers have, at most, one or two options for broadband providers, leaving those who don't like the steps a provider is taking without a choice to change.

Additionally, dismantling net neutrality rules will hurt small businesses and will stifle innovation. Under these rules, internet service providers would be allowed to force businesses to pay to play online. While larger, well-established companies would likely be able to compete, startups and entrepreneurs across the Nation might not be able to afford such fees, causing instability and limiting the reach of their new businesses.

In New Hampshire, innovative small businesses are the backbone of our economy, creating good jobs and stimulating economic growth. But undoing net neutrality could limit the ability of that next great business to get off the ground.

A Manchester small business owner recently wrote to my staff to say: "I believe that Net Neutrality should stay in effect as it allows every business to be on the same footing." The business owner also said that under this proposal, "If you are leveraging the internet to boost your business, it will affect it dramatically."

That business owner is not alone. Just today, several members of the rural and agricultural business community in New England, including Stoneyfield from Londonderry, NH, wrote to Chairman Pai to say: "Repealing net neutrality would have a crippling effect on rural economies, further restricting access to the internet for rural business at a point in time where we need to expand and speed this access instead."

Hundreds of people have called my office to voice their support for net neutrality. People across the Nation recognize that the plan proposed by the Republican-led FCC will truly impact their way of life.

In response to Chairman Pai's proposals, millions have also written to the FCC to state their position on this issue, but it seems that this process has been corrupted, with internet bots placing hundreds of thousands of comments in favor of repealing net neutrality. Roughly 400,000 of those comments may have, it seems, originated from Russia email addresses. Additionally, 50,000 consumer service complaints have been excluded from public record, according to a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the National Hispanic Media Coalition.

On any FCC decision, public input is vital, and on this decision, which impacts every single American, it is unacceptable that the public's opinion may have been distorted by fraudulent comments and additional anomalies.

Last week, I—along with 27 of my colleagues—wrote to Chairman Pai calling for a delay in this vote until we have a clear understanding of what happened during the policymaking process. Unfortunately, Chairman Pai has continued rushing toward this vote, and, as has been all too common with the Trump administration, the Republican-led FCC is favoring the priorities and voices of corporate special

interests rather than listening to hard-working Americans who want to keep net neutrality.

The Commission has failed to address the concerns that these comments are artificially generated, has not held one public hearing on net neutrality, and is moving forward at an alarming pace, without regard for what eliminating these rules would mean for our economy and our consumers.

Undoing net neutrality will fundamentally change the concept of a free and open internet that so many Granite Staters and Americans have come to know and have benefited from. Approving this plan would be a reckless decision.

I am going to continue fighting for priorities that put consumers first, that help small businesses innovate and thrive, and that advance an open and free internet.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to once again talk about the need to pass tax reform for hard-working Americans. The House has passed a bill, the Senate has passed a bill, and now, of course, we are working through the conference committee to get the very best product we can for the American people.

This tax relief is not just about reducing the tax burden on hard-working Americans and making sure they can keep more of their hard-earned dollars after tax, but it is also very much about economic growth. The tax relief package we are putting together that is coming together through the conference efforts, working to improve on both the House version and the Senate version, is designed to grow our economy. That is incredibly important because over the last decade, what we have seen are stagnant wages and income. So workers are working as hard as ever—harder than ever—but they are not seeing that growth in their paycheck. That is why we have to make this tax relief package pro-growth, so at the end of the day, that worker has a lower tax burden, but they also have a rising wage and more income. It is the combination of those two things that really—it is the rising tide that lifts all boats, if you will. That is how we generate that higher standard of living for workers and tax-payers across this great Nation.

So that is what we are working to do: tax relief, grow the economy, create more jobs—and create them here at home versus overseas—and higher wages and income.

These are just some of the statistics from the tax relief package that we put together. These are provided by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation as well as the White House Council of Economic Advisers. The objective is to grow wages by \$4,000 over the 10-year scoring period, making sure our workers are seeing real wages. The estimate right now is that this tax bill is pro-growth and will generate, on average, \$4,000 in higher wages, combined with an average tax cut of about \$2,200. That is an average family—a family of four with median income.

It will generate almost 1 million new jobs, and that is what, of course, pushes wages higher. When you create more jobs, it is that demand for labor that pushes wages higher. That is how it works. We are talking about almost 1 million new jobs over the 10-year period and a 3.7-percent larger economy. So growing the economy, creating more jobs, and it is that demand for labor on the part of business that pushes wages and income higher.

When we look at the next chart I have, we see that we provide tax relief across all incomes. So it is really focused on lower income, middle class, making sure that, like I said, wage earners are saving more of their hard-earned dollars, but the effort is to cut taxes across all income groups, and that is what we do. It starts by taking the seven brackets we have and reducing them. It is just kind of simple math.

The House plan reduces the number of brackets to only three. We keep the seven different brackets. The reason for that is because the objective is to lower everyone's tax rate, and we are better able to do that by keeping the seven tax rates.

Some might say: You want to do simplification. We do want to do simplification, and we do tax simplification. There is no question that we do tax simplification because the complexity in calculating your taxes is calculating your taxable income, your adjusted gross income subject to taxes. That is the complicated part. Whether we have three different rates to apply to it or seven different rates to apply, depending on which bracket you fall into, that really doesn't add complexity.

So we keep the simplification intact while we make sure that we provide tax relief across all of the different tax brackets or tax rates. That is what we see in this second chart.

In addition, we keep or expand many of the tax deductions or tax provisions that are important to families, and that starts with the child tax. Well, I should say it actually starts with the standard deduction. We double, in essence, the standard deduction. For an individual, right now it is a little over \$6,000 a person. We double that standard deduction to \$12,000. For a married couple, you are talking over \$24,000 that is covered under the standard deduction, no tax.

In addition, if you are an individual and you have dependents, either children or maybe taking care of a parent or something like that, you get \$18,000 in that standard deduction. Why is that important? Because by doubling that standard deduction, we go from 7 out of 10 filers not itemizing to something like 9 out of 10 tax filers not itemizing. This means real simplification. It means doing your tax return on maybe just a one-page form. This means you are not only reducing rates but also greatly simplifying the Tax Code.

We keep other provisions that are very important for American families and, in fact, enhance them. For example, the child tax credit is doubled. So not only do we double the standard deduction, but we also double the child tax credit. We go from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per child. This is going to make a huge difference for families.

Also, for family businesses, family farms, and small business we double the estate tax, the death tax unified credit, and include the step-up in basis. It is hugely important to make sure you can transition a small business, farm, or ranch from one generation to the next.

To save for college, we enable the 521 savings accounts to continue for parents. Another very important one is we encourage businesses to provide paid family and medical leave by giving them a tax credit to partially offset an employee's pay while caring for a child or family member.

Other things we keep, in terms of deductions that are very important, again, to hard-working families are as follows:

The mortgage interest deduction. We make sure they can continue to deduct the interest on their home mortgage.

The deduction of charitable contributions. It is obviously very important for the greater good of our society that people can continue to contribute to charities they believe in and support and that they can deduct those charitable contributions.

The child and dependent care tax credits, the adoption tax credit, and the earned-income tax credit. We make sure people can continue to contribute to their 401(k) accounts on a basis that is tax-advantaged.

Then, medical expense deductions. Obviously, for our seniors, this is very important. For somebody who has a medical condition or an illness, being able to deduct those medical expenses is extremely important.

This is about making sure hard-working Americans can have not only tax relief but also the pro-growth aspect they see in the rising wages of incomes.

That is what I want to talk about in this third chart, which goes to supporting our businesses across this great country. Small business is the backbone of our economy. Small businesses, farms, and ranches are the absolute backbone of our economy. Small businesses typically are passthrough businesses, which means the income flows