

Coons	Inhofe	Perdue
Corker	Isakson	Portman
Cornyn	Johnson	Risch
Cotton	Jones	Roberts
Crapo	Kennedy	Rounds
Cruz	King	Rubio
Daines	Klobuchar	Sasse
Enzi	Lankford	Scott
Ernst	Leahy	Shelby
Fischer	Lee	Sullivan
Flake	Manchin	Tester
Gardner	McCaskill	Thune
Grassley	McConnell	Tillis
Hatch	Moran	Toomey
Heitkamp	Murkowski	Warner
Heller	Murphy	Wicker
Hoeven	Nelson	Young
Hyde-Smith	Paul	

NAYS—34

Baldwin	Harris	Schatz
Blumenthal	Hassan	Schumer
Booker	Heinrich	Shaheen
Brown	Hirono	Smith
Cantwell	Kaine	Stabenow
Cardin	Markey	Udall
Carper	Menendez	Van Hollen
Casey	Merkley	Warren
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Durbin	Peters	Wyden
Feinstein	Reed	
Gillibrand	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—4

Donnelly	Graham
Duckworth	McCain

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Michael B. Brennan, of Wisconsin, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, John Hoeven, Johnny Isakson, James Lankford, Steve Daines, Ben Sasse, Mike Crapo, John Kennedy, John Barrasso, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, James M. Inhofe, Richard Burr, Mike Rounds, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, Cory Gardner.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Michael B. Brennan, of Wisconsin, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) and the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 88 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Alexander	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Burr	Heller	Rounds
Capito	Hoeven	Rubio
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Collins	Inhofe	Scott
Corker	Isakson	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson	Sullivan
Cotton	Kennedy	Thune
Crapo	Lankford	Tillis
Cruz	Lee	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Young
Ernst	Murkowski	
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—47

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Booker	Jones	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Murphy	Whitehouse
Harris	Murray	Wyden
Hassan	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—4

Donnelly	Graham
Duckworth	McCain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 47.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael B. Brennan, of Wisconsin, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRING OF JAMES COMEY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, 1 year ago today, the President of the United States did the unthinkable. He did at least what many people thought was unthinkable. He fired the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, James Comey. Shortly thereafter, he acknowledged the reason. He told NBC's Lester Holt that he fired James Comey because he was thinking about "this Russia thing" and how unjustified he thought the investigation was. He later told officials of Vladimir Putin's government in a private meeting in the Oval Office that this firing relieved him of the pressure that he was feeling as a result of the Russia investigation.

The 1-year anniversary of Jim Comey's firing might well be permitted

to pass without notice, but little did we know at the time that it would be part of a relentless and repeated denunciation of professional law enforcement at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, at the Department of Justice, even at the CIA, and law enforcement agencies all around the country. This concerted and coordinated attack on the FBI and Department of Justice is no accident. It is part of a strategy to undermine the credibility not only of the special counsel's investigation of collusion by the Trump campaign with Russia in its meddling in the 2016 election and the potential of obstruction of justice and coverup by the President and his administration, but it is also deeply alarming as an attack on professional law enforcement.

The President's attacks have become so numerous and so brazen that they have almost become the new normal. Likewise, the attacks by his sycophants and surrogates in Congress undermine the credibility and trust of the FBI and the Department of Justice. That is why I am here today—because words have consequences.

These attacks have ramifications for the FBI when it investigates a crime. The willingness of potential witnesses to talk to them may be undermined. Their ability to prevent crime may be undercut because of informants' lack of trust in them. And the credibility of FBI agents at a trial in a conflict of credibility with a defendant who is lying can be sabotaged by the President through these denunciations—far beyond the special prosecutor's investigation.

This attack on law enforcement has consequences for the safety and security of our Nation, indeed, our national security, because the FBI needs those informants, needs credibility as witnesses, needs the trust of the American people to do its job in keeping America safe from sabotage or subterfuge internally, as well as organized crime, drug dealing—the panoply of threats that exist to our safety.

It is no accident that terrorist attacks have reduced in severity since 9/11. It is no accident that crime is at lower levels than in recent years. It is no accident that Americans feel safer as they walk the streets and communities of America, rural and urban. It is because we have devoted resources to local law enforcement, as well as the Federal agencies that are vital to support local law enforcement with the information and data they need to do their job and with the enforcement they provide in solving crimes and making sure the bad guys are convicted and go away.

The best laws in the world are dead letter if they are unenforced. The new laws that we pass here will mean nothing without strong and effective law enforcement.

We should all be deeply alarmed and concerned about this new normal of a President of the United States—who is responsible for making sure the laws

are faithfully executed—actually attacking the agency that is responsible for the enforcement necessary for execution of those laws.

Here are a few examples. On April 6, 2018, a notice appeared on the front page of backpage.com confirming that the Department of Justice seized the website and took it offline—a crucial and important step in the fight against sex trafficking. On that same day, the FBI raided the Sedona home of Michael Lacey, a founder of backpage.com and one of the 7 individuals charged in a 93-count indictment for Federal crimes relating to facilitating prostitution and laundering money.

For years, backpage.com and its owners have knowingly concealed evidence of criminality by systematically editing its adult ads to facilitate prostitution and sex trafficking, including modern-day slavery of children. Backpage's misconduct led to the prostitution of a 14-year-old Connecticut girl, who was advertised on the website for clients in Connecticut, New York, and Atlantic City. Without the intervention of the Department of Justice and the FBI, many more children could have been exploited and victimized by backpage.

We know about the extraordinary magnitude of backpage's activities and about the deep harm it causes as a result of an investigation performed by Senate committees. The Senate has taken steps to stop that kind of promotion on the internet as a result of legislation that Senator ROB PORTMAN of Ohio and I led here, legislation called SESTA. It was bipartisan legislation that passed overwhelmingly. The legislation will assist victims and survivors in having their day in court and allow law enforcement to do even better in the fight against sex trafficking.

That story is just one example of the laudable work that the Department of Justice and the FBI do every day to keep America safe. The attack against them has extraordinary irony and harm because it seeks to sow doubt about democratic institutions that are vital to our way of life.

President Trump has literally taken a page from his authoritarian heroes who systematically seek to say that the law is not what our enforcement agencies say, not what our democratic institutions say, but what they say. He has persistently and purposefully attempted to undermine all of the Department of Justice.

The fact is, these attacks have effect. When they come from the President's mouth, they have consequences. Not surprisingly, these repeated caustic and careless attacks have diminished public confidence in these institutions. Since Donald Trump entered office, reports suggest that a number of Americans who view the FBI capably has diminished by 28 percent. Just 38 percent of Americans have confidence in the FBI. That is distressing for a party that once espoused and supported law

enforcement. The long-term negative collateral consequences of these assaults on our top law enforcement agencies are likely to be extensive.

Consider the dedication, the courage, the tenacity, and the strength that is required of those at the FBI to do their job day in and day out, putting their lives on the line, literally risking their well-being not over a year or a couple of years but, many of them, for careers, a lifetime. They are among the finest men and women in public service.

The FBI is one of our premier law enforcement institutions. The Department of Justice is and should be the marvel of the world for its fairness and its unrelenting dedication to do justice. As one Attorney General—Justice Jackson—said, its goal is not to seek convictions but to do justice, and that is the mission that it performs.

A recent case by the Department of Justice's National Security and Civil Rights Division shows how Donald Trump's attacks are weakening support for the FBI's important work.

In March of this year, three anti-Muslim militia members who were on trial for plotting to slaughter Somali refugees in Southwest Kansas adopted a defense strategy that could have been taken directly from the Trump playbook or from his Twitter feed. Defense attorneys in that case argued that a biased FBI conspired against their clients because of their political beliefs. The defendants said that their political beliefs were responsible for their prosecutions, not their own actions. In a turn of phrase that is very suggestive of the President's Twitter feed, the defense attorney argued that the defendants' discussion of killing Muslim “cockroaches” amounted to “locker room talk,” which was inspired, no doubt, partly by the 2016 election.

Meanwhile, the government had to deal with jurors who expressed a number of concerns about the honesty and corruption at the top levels of the FBI, questioning the ability and integrity of the organization.

Ms. Ifrah Ahmed, a Somali resident of the apartment complex the defendants were plotting to blow up, felt differently about the FBI investigation. She and other residents said that the verdict allayed their fears and affirmed their faith in the justice system.

It was because of the work of dedicated law enforcement professionals that the defendants' plan to bomb innocent and peaceful Muslim immigrants was thwarted in a victory for the rule of law and a victory for civil rights and our national security. But instead of applauding or lauding victories like this one, the President of the United States continues to spread a false narrative. His sole purpose is advancing his political agenda, protecting himself, and shielding himself from accountability. His attacks are designed to undermine the credibility of the FBI and designed to shield him from responsibility and apparent culpability for possible criminal wrongdoing.

In reality, the FBI and the DOJ work every day to protect Americans against threats, both foreign and domestic, while upholding the Constitution.

The Department of Justice includes more than 40 separate organizations, including the FBI, and more than 110,000 employees. I know about the ones in Connecticut. As a former U.S. attorney, the ethic and tradition of the U.S. attorney's office is about upholding the rule of law and the dedication to doing justice.

The FBI has more than 30,000 employees spread over 56 field offices around the United States. They are dedicated to protecting the United States from terrorism, cyber attacks, public corruption, violent crime, and abridgement of civil rights. According to its most recent annual report, the FBI disrupted more than 700 terrorist incidents and over 170 violent criminal organizations in 2017 alone. The FBI targets crimes not only in the streets but in boardrooms. In the same time period, it disrupted more than 430 criminal enterprises engaged in white-collar crimes.

Let's make no mistake—wrongdoing affects real people in their real lives. There are very few victimless crimes, if any. Every crime has some victim and some survivor. That is the reason they are prosecuted, and that is why we hire those prosecutors and FBI agents to go after lawbreakers. We should reward them for disrupting and deterring the lawbreakers, not denounce them, as the President has done.

The FBI's hard work in building cases the right way leads to victories in the courtroom. I have seen them and have prosecuted them myself. The prosecutor, whether it is an assistant U.S. attorney or a U.S. attorney, contributes mightily to those victories, but they would be impossible without the nuts and bolts—the investigative work, the shoe leather, and sometimes the very significant risks involved in uncovering the truth and bringing it to court. Sometimes FBI agents work for months undercover on a single case at grave jeopardy to themselves. More than 90 percent of terrorism- and gang-related cases result in a conviction—a judgment favorable to the United States.

These statistics that I have cited here represent only a fraction of the work these agencies do to protect America every day, in real life, for real people. Despite President Trump's efforts to water down environmental protections, the FBI continues to pursue cases where corporations violate clean water and clean air standards and threaten public health.

At the end of April, the Department of Justice charged the ex-CEO of Volkswagen with conspiracy in the company's rigging of diesel vehicles to feign compliance and falsely portray compliance with the company's and Federal standards.

Volkswagen deceived American regulators. Why should that matter to ordinary Americans? Well, it is an unlevel

playing field with its competitors if it cuts corners. So it impacts fair competition, but it also impacts our clean air and the safety and health of Americans who breathe that air. Essentially, they not only deceived regulators, but they defrauded American consumers for years, promising them those standards, which they knew they were failing to meet. Only because of the tireless efforts of Federal investigators and prosecutors has the company's chief executive now been brought to justice to face these charges. The Department of Justice's actions send a message to businesses both here and abroad that efforts to cheat American consumers or harm the environment will have consequences. They ought to pay attention. They ought to be deterred.

The Department of Justice also develops key initiatives to respond to urgent threats, particularly in the frontline against terrorism. The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces are comprised of small cells of highly trained, locally based, passionately committed investigators, analysts, linguists, SWAT experts, and other specialists from dozens of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies. They operate as part of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, because the FBI has that responsibility for our national security, along with them as a team. When it comes to investigating terrorism, they do it all. They chase down leads, gather evidence, make arrests, provide security for special events, conduct training, collect and share intelligence, and respond to threats and incidents at a moment's notice. These task forces are based in 104 cities nationwide, including at least one in each of the FBI's field offices.

Without any exaggeration, these investigators and prosecutors protect us. They protect American lives from terrorist threats, both at home and abroad. Just last month FBI agents, working with the Newark Joint Terrorism Task Force, thwarted a plot of five men to join ISIS and carry out an attack in ISIS's name on U.S. soil using homemade bombs. Because of their brave and tenacious efforts and their countless hours of hard work—hour after hour, day after day—this plot, and many others like it, were disrupted and American lives were saved.

America has always faced threats to our national security and public safety, even as they are more complex today than ever before. We need the kind of professionalism that the FBI and the Department of Justice and other agencies bring to law enforcement every day. For all of us who have been Federal prosecutors—whether a U.S. attorney, as I was, or in another capacity—these attacks are repugnant. They belie a fundamental misunderstanding of the ethos and tradition of justice and the rule of law in our democracy.

Unfortunately, President Trump has failed not only to stand up for those law enforcement agencies, but he has actually hindered, actively and consist-

ently, their vital work in protecting our Nation. He has undermined their stature and credibility. He has attacked their integrity, all without any basis in fact.

President Reagan once said that facts are stubborn things. The American people should know the facts. If they do, they will appreciate that the facts show that the Department of Justice and the FBI, even with their faults, are a paragon of law enforcement. Their faults should not be minimized or dismissed. They ought to be addressed, but not by denouncing or demeaning their hard work.

The numbers and statistics I have given and the examples I have cited are not meant defensively for them. They don't need my defense. Their actions and their work speak louder than anyone's words. I hope they will continue that service and sacrifice, undiscouraged and undeterred by these rash and reckless attacks from the President and surrogates who support him.

I personally thank them for their service and sacrifice, as all Americans should, and I thank many of them for their friendship.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, this week the Senate will vote on the nomination of Michael Brennan to serve on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Milwaukee.

Judge Brennan is a highly qualified nominee with broad, bipartisan support in his own State of Wisconsin. The Senate Judiciary Committee received numerous letters in support of Judge Brennan's nomination, including from the longtime Democratic Milwaukee district attorney. I fully support this nomination.

I have heard from some of my colleagues—and especially from those on the other side of the aisle—that they believe Judge Brennan shouldn't have received a hearing before the Judiciary Committee. They say this because one Senator from Wisconsin didn't return the blue slip. But their opinions are based on an incorrect understanding of the blue slip's history.

As I explained last year several times on the Senate floor and several times in committee, the blue slip courtesy is just that—a courtesy. It has a history going back to 1917. Since then, chairmen of the Judiciary Committee have distributed blue slips to home State Senators to get feedback on the nominees to the Federal bench in their respective States.

Chairmen have applied the blue slip courtesy differently in its 100-year history. For the first 39 years of its existence, the blue slip had no bearing on whether a nominee went through the committee process. Then, in 1956, Senator James Eastland of Mississippi became chairman. He started requiring both home State Senators to return

positive blue slips before the committee would ever proceed on a judicial nomination. Scholars maintain that Chairman Eastland adopted this policy to allow southern Senators to veto nominees sympathetic to the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Then, when Senator Ted Kennedy took over the chairmanship from Senator Eastland in 1979, he went back to the original blue slip policy.

Then comes along Chairman Strom Thurmond continuing that policy. Then comes along Chairman Joe Biden continuing that policy, and Chairman ORRIN HATCH followed that policy. Under the policies of those chairmen just mentioned, negative or unreturned blue slips did not necessarily preclude a hearing for a nominee.

When Senator LEAHY became chairman during the Bush administration, he did away with this policy and resurrected Chairman Eastland's strict blue slip policy. The reason for this strict blue slip policy was obvious to everyone at that time—at least obvious to everybody on our side of the aisle—to block President George W. Bush's judicial nominees based on politics and ideology, something that never played much of a role in a lot of these nominations prior to 2002. In sum, only 2 of my 18 predecessors who extended the blue slip courtesy required signoff from both home State Senators.

When Senator LEAHY adopted an historical blue slip policy, that was his prerogative as chairman, and nobody argues with that. But it is my prerogative to have the same blue slip policy as Chairman Biden and Chairman Kennedy and the vast majority of predecessors. Accordingly, I have said this: Negative or unreturned blue slips will not necessarily preclude the hearing for circuit court nominees unless the White House failed to consult with home State Senators. I get all sorts of information—and I demand all sorts of information—from the White House on this sort of consultation that is going on. That is why I held hearings for David Stras, Kyle Duncan, Michael Brennan, and Ryan Bounds, despite the lack of two positive blue slips from home State Senators. This policy is completely bipartisan. I have applied it to blue slips of Democratic and Republican Senators.

Some people have suggested that I had a different blue slip policy during the final 2 years of President Obama's administration. They pointed to nine judicial nominees with blue slip problems who didn't receive hearings. But five of these nominees were to district courts, and I have said repeatedly that I am less likely to proceed to district court nominees without two positive blue slips.

With respect to the four circuit court nominees who didn't receive hearings during the last Congress, their nominations simply came too late in the Congress to process. They were nominated during the Presidential election year of

2016, and in Presidential election years, we have the Leahy-Thurmond rule that applies. Under the Leahy-Thurmond rule, the Senate typically stops confirming judges by midsummer. I am assuming that I gave Senators in 2016 the same timeline that I gave to former Senator Franken to return his blue slip for Justice Stras. We wouldn't have started holding hearings then until 2016, and by delaying until that period of time, we would have not had the record number of circuit court judges that we have had during this Presidency, because, then, the Leahy-Thurmond rule would have barred their confirmations. These four nominees also lacked floor support, and it would have been a waste of time and resources if we had proceeded. That was my judgment as chairman.

Chairman LEAHY similarly refused to hold hearings for at least six circuit court nominees for reasons besides the blue slips. He denied hearings for three nominees in the Fourth Circuit: Steve Matthews, Robert Conrad, and Glen Conrad. These nominees had two positive blue slips from their home State Senators, and two were nominated more than a year before the 2008 Presidential election, but even then, Chairman LEAHY refused to process them.

Chairman LEAHY also refused to act on the nomination of Peter Keisler, President Bush's nominee to the DC Circuit, who was nominated in 2006. Obviously, blue slips were not the reason for my predecessor's decision to stall Mr. Keisler's nomination for more than 2 years since the District of Columbia has no Senators. These decisions allowed President Obama then to stack the DC Circuit and also the Fourth Circuit with liberal judges.

Chairman LEAHY also declined to hold hearings for two Sixth Circuit Court nominees to Ohio seats, even though both Ohio Senators had returned positive blue slips. The Democratic Senators from Michigan asked Chairman LEAHY to halt proceedings on all Sixth Circuit nominees, not just those from Michigan. So Chairman LEAHY honored this request and denied a hearing to the Ohio nominees, even though the blue slips had been returned. This was the first time ever a chairman allowed Senators to halt committee proceedings on nominees for seats in other States.

As Chairman LEAHY's example shows, there isn't just one reason. There are multiple reasons for any chairman of the Judiciary Committee to deny a hearing to a nominee. Likewise, my decision not to hold hearings for the four nominees in 2016 wasn't based solely on the lack of blue slips. It is simply false, then, for my colleagues to say I changed my blue-slip policy since that particular time.

As to my decision then to hold a hearing on the nominee now before the Senate, Judge Brennan, I was satisfied that the White House adequately consulted with both Wisconsin Senators. The White House sought input from the

Wisconsin Senators and considered all the candidates recommended by each Senator. I understand the frustration that Wisconsin's judicial nominating commission hasn't worked out as had been planned by the two Senators, but Judge Brennan was the only candidate to receive bipartisan support from the commission process that is used in Wisconsin. Moreover, the commission's dysfunction can't be used as an excuse to deny the President his constitutional authority to make judicial nominations.

I would also like to point out that each Senator who has withheld a blue slip this Congress also voted to abolish the filibuster for judicial nominations back in 2013. The argument then was that 41 Senators shouldn't be allowed to block the will of a majority of this Senate, but now these same Senators have reversed themselves, saying any one Senator should have that right, through holding a blue slip, to denying the Senate an opportunity to vote.

Understand, just a few years ago, they wanted to abolish 41 Senators holding up a nomination, but today they stand before us and say one Senator ought to be able to do what they said 41 Senators shouldn't be able to do. I will not allow the blue slip to be abused in this way. The blue slip is meant to encourage consultation between the White House and home State Senators. It is not a way for Senators to have veto power over nominees for political or ideological reasons.

Finally, I hear a lot these days about the President stacking the courts or the Senate rubberstamping nominees. Well, I stand by our process. It gives Senators every opportunity to probe deeply into nominees' backgrounds. As five nominees from last year will attest, not everyone makes it through this rigorous scrutiny. I would like to bring attention to two recent Supreme Court decisions that the Trump administration lost.

In *Sessions v. Dimaya*, the Supreme Court held that the government could not deport an immigrant under a vague statutory provision. The pivotal vote was cast by President Trump's own Supreme Court nominee, Justice Neil Gorsuch.

In another case, *Chicago v. Sessions*, the Seventh Circuit held that the government could not deny funding to so-called sanctuary cities. It happens the three judges who carried that case were all appointed by Republican Presidents.

I bring up these cases not because I agree or disagree with their outcomes but simply to point out that the fears of the President stacking the judiciary are overblown. Conservative judges apply the law as written, regardless of the results, but I suppose liberals expect their judges to be results-oriented. That is why we can always confidently predict how a liberal judge might rule on a case. Liberal outside groups' real fear, then, is that newly confirmed judges recognize that their role is to

neutrally apply the law, not to legislate from the bench.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I come to the floor today to discuss an issue that impacts consumers, small businesses, our general economy, and most families. It is the issue of net neutrality. The concept behind this is pretty simple. It ensures that all content on the internet is treated equally so that the internet can remain an openly accessible platform for users and an equal playing field for everyone.

Unfortunately, some leaders at the Federal Communications Commission disagreed. Despite being given the responsibility to make sure they operate in the public interest when it comes to our Nation's communications networks, in December, the FCC walked away from this important responsibility and decided to put the needs of companies ahead of customers.

It appears with this administration that everything is for sale. That means public lands, our privacy, and, in this case, the pathway American families use every single day to get on the internet. Led by Chairman Pai, the FCC voted for a radical plan in December to dismantle net neutrality rules and threaten the existence of a free and open internet as we know it today. This new plan will allow large internet providers the power to freely block, throttle, or manipulate consumers' access to the internet in ways that profit the provider.

Think about your access to apps and the internet today, and compare it to your access to cable channels. If you want more channels, you put in more money. Today the internet is open to us, and we have access to it. The Trump administration, through the Federal Communications Commission, wants to change that. If you want fast internet service, you pay more money. If you want access to certain apps, you pay more money. That changes the nature of the internet as we have known it. It is a dramatic change in the way we communicate and gather information. It is just another bill.

Many people are now facing the prospect of cable TV shows and other things they have to pay more money for on a pretty substantial monthly bill. Now comes the FCC to say: We have another monthly bill for you if you want the same access to the internet today that you had before. Not only does this mean less choice and higher cost for consumers whose access to content could be determined by what is in the best financial interest of