

that we had just found out that his first court date was going to be about 3 weeks later, so I decided to go back to Turkey 3 weeks later and be in that courtroom to hear the testimony for myself, to hear the 62-page indictment play out. I was in that courtroom from about 9 o'clock in the morning on Monday until about 10 o'clock that night. If you don't know what a kangaroo court is and you can't read it on this slide, just Google it quickly, because what I saw was a kangaroo court.

First off, you should think about the setting. It is unlike any setting you could ever imagine in the United States. It doesn't have a trial jury, but it has a three-judge panel up there, and the prosecutor is really elevated to almost being another judge. The prosecutor was up at the dais. We were in a room that was about half the size of this room. It was maybe about two-thirds the size. It was a big room. The defense attorney was off to the side about another 30 or 40 feet, and the defendant was right in front of this panel of judges and was being looked down upon. He had to testify for 6 hours on his own behalf. One doesn't have a choice in Turkey. Then they listed the charges.

Why do I say it was a kangaroo court? Let me give a summary. I am not going to cover all of the charges because my time is limited today, but let me give a summary of some of the charges.

In the time I was there, there were about a half dozen secret witnesses. The defendant didn't get to face his accusers. In Turkey, these secret witnesses can say what they want to say. The essence of one secret witness's testimony was that he knew that Pastor Brunson was involved in either plotting the coup or in working with the PKK, which is a terrorist organization fundamentally made up of Kurds, because he witnessed a light on in this church for 4 hours.

First off, in the U.S. system, I know you are probably not going to get prosecuted for 35 years for having a light on for 4 hours—at least I hope not. Yet what makes this even more challenging is that this is the church. This church only seats about 120 people. It has two very small upstairs' rooms. I know because I have been there. We took these pictures when I visited Turkey after the visit to the prison. This is the room that is alleged to have had a light on for 4 hours, but there is one problem—no window, no way to possibly see into this room. In fact, the windows downstairs are closed with storm—I am trying to think of the name—shutters, wooden shutters. There is no way you could even see in. Yet this witness had what they considered to be compelling testimony that a light had been on, and for that reason, the pastor had to have been involved in the terrorist plot or the coup.

Another of the charges that have been alleged by the prosecution is that all of the churches in America are con-

nected and that they actually work in unison in other countries to disrupt the governments of other countries. A Christian church may take the Word to people in other countries, but it is really kind of organized as an intelligence-gathering and destabilizing force on behalf of the American Government in order to disrupt other sovereign nations.

Literally, this is how they have been thinking, and this is what they have been using to prosecute him. It is a kangaroo court.

I maintain that what we have is a hostage situation here. We have President Erdogan saying: If we give him a pass, give us somebody we are trying to extradite from the United States. On the one hand, they say you have to work through the system, and we have to let justice be served. On the other hand, the President has said: If you give us somebody we are trying to extradite from the United States, then we will give you Pastor Brunson. This is a hostage situation. This is religious persecution.

I will finish with this. Turkey is a NATO ally. It is an important NATO ally. It has been in NATO since 1952. It is in a very dangerous part of the world. It has a lot of challenges that it has to deal with—the Syrian conflict and its own internal economic challenges. There are a number of challenges, and I understand that President Erdogan's job is difficult. I would like to make it easier. As a co-lead of the Senate's NATO Observer Group, I would like to actually strengthen our partnership and make safer and more secure its homeland and its threat from foreign adversaries.

Yet, today, I have a NATO ally that is behaving like no NATO ally ever has in the history of the alliance. These are the sorts of things we are supposed to be doing as members of the NATO alliance, not illegally imprisoning for 586 days a Presbyterian minister.

We will be doing the NDAA markup next week, which is the National Defense Authorization Act. I will be working with other Members and will have to put forth provisions in the NDAA, which is the last thing that I would like to do. I would like to put provisions forward that strengthen the alliance with NATO, that send a very clear signal that we want to help them secure their homeland, and that send a clear signal that we want to work together in the fight in Syria. But today I can't have that as a priority. Today my No. 1 priority is releasing Pastor Brunson. I hope everybody understands that this is something that everybody—whether you are from North Carolina, North Dakota, or any State in this Nation—should all stand as a nation saying: This is not how you treat an American citizen and certainly not a NATO ally.

I look forward, hopefully, to never doing this speech again. I hope that by next week Pastor Brunson is free and that we sent a very clear message to

all the other people in Turkey who are in prison because of their faith that this is unacceptable behavior.

Thank you, Mr. President.  
I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF GINA HASPEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate confirmed two more superbly qualified circuit court nominees. Joel Carson and John Nalbandian are the 20th and the 21st circuit judges we have confirmed this Congress.

This morning our colleagues on the Intelligence Committee finished their consideration of Gina Haspel to be CIA Director and reported her nomination favorably with bipartisan support. Ms. Haspel's testimony and record have showcased the poise, talent, and experience that make her an excellent selection.

Senators heard about her 30-plus years of CIA experience, spanning sensitive operations from the Cold War to the Global War on Terror. That background makes Ms. Haspel an ideal pick at this particular moment, when Secretary Mattis has explained that counterterrorism and a renewed great-power competition are two of the key challenges facing our Nation.

So it is no wonder that James Clapper, President Obama's Director of National Intelligence, said: "I think the world of Gina; she is capable, smart, very experienced, well-respected by the Agency rank and file, and a great person."

Just yesterday, our current DNI, Dan Coats, wrote in USA Today that "she is a person of high integrity with valuable frontline and executive experience . . . who is willing to speak truth to power when required on behalf of our nation."

Gina Haspel is the right woman at the right time. Her nomination has support from national security leaders and Senators in both parties. There is no reason why her confirmation should be delayed, and I look forward to advancing it expeditiously following the committee's action.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. President, on another matter, over the last 20 years, the internet has yielded progress that was the stuff of science fiction just a generation ago. In so many ways it has spawned a new economy and fostered new connections across the country and the world.

In large part these successes owe to a bipartisan consensus that Washington, DC, should be largely hands-off, but, of course, like every exciting new frontier of the economy, the internet attracted attention from the crowd that prefers to regulate first and ask questions later.

In 2015 President Obama's FCC set out to fix what wasn't broken. It imposed regulations designed for Depression-era telephones on new technologies that fit in our pockets. So

much for the light-touch approach that helped the early internet grow.

Last year, under the leadership of Chairman Ajit Pai, the FCC sought to rectify this mistake and restore the rules that helped the internet flourish while still protecting consumers from abuses. The resolution Democrats are putting forward today would undo that progress. It would reimpose heavy-handed Depression-era rules on the most vibrant, fast-growing sectors of our economy. It is wrong on the merits. It is also the wrong way to go about this process.

The CRA is useful when it lets elected representatives rein in regulatory overreach by unelected bureaucrats, but this resolution doesn't seek to rein in overregulation. It seeks to reimpose it. What is worse, by using the CRA mechanism, the Democrats seek to make the 2015 rules permanent going forward. The CRA would handicap this FCC or future FCC's ability to revise the rules even if provisions were widely seen as necessary.

There is a better way to proceed. It is called bipartisan legislation. Senator THUNE has reached out to the Democrats on the committee to draft internet "rules of the road" for the 21st century—a set of rules that would safeguard consumers but still prevent regulators from stifling innovation at every turn. Already, multiple Democratic colleagues have drawn the same conclusions with regards to preemptive overcorrection by the FCC. The senior Senator from Florida and the junior Senator from Hawaii, for example, have both expressed a desire to collaborate on bipartisan legislation.

But Democrats have already made clear that the resolution today is about the elections in November. They know they will not ultimately be successful, but they want to campaign on their desire to add new regulations to the internet. This resolution takes us in the wrong direction, and we should reject it.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on one final matter, later today I will be meeting with members of an industry with deep roots in my home State of Kentucky—our bourbon and spirits distillers.

Judging by recent headlines, we will have plenty of good news to discuss. After 8 years of Democrats' policies enriching big cities but leaving small businesses behind, Republican policies are helping workers and job creators to thrive all across our country. From Louisville to Kansas City to Portland, our growing craft distilling industry is a perfect example. They are enjoying a pro-growth provision in the historic tax reform Republicans passed last year, which lowered excise taxes on beer, wine, and spirits and modernized the regulatory policy affecting each.

Interestingly enough, the Craft Beverage Modernization and Tax Reform Act even began as a bipartisan effort with 56 cosponsors here in the Senate, led by Senators BLUNT, WYDEN, and PORTMAN.

Of course, not a single Democrat showed up when it was time to vote on tax reform. But Republicans accomplished it anyway, and now the New York Times can publish stories about how the measure is making a big difference for small craft distillers.

As one such report puts it, distilling is a burgeoning source of jobs, tax revenue, and tourism dollars in every State. For example, the Kentucky Distillers' Association reported that just last year the bourbon industry accounted for 17,500 jobs and over 1 million visitors to my home State. That is a big shift from the so-called Obama recovery, when almost all the limited jobs and investment poured into the biggest cities. But it is a new day.

Now, FEW Spirits, in Illinois, has hired more workers and is replacing its overseas glassmaker with an American one. J. Rieger & Co., in Missouri, has found extra room in the budget to expand its sales team and begin selling its products further across the country.

In the Democratic leader's own backyard of Brooklyn, the New York Distilling Company recently cut the wholesale case price on its signature gin by more than 50 percent. According to one of its cofounders, Allen Katz, "the reaction from our industry peers has been jaw-dropping." In Kentucky, which is home to more than 50 distilleries, there are plenty of examples to choose from. Thanks to the lowered excise tax, Casey Jones Distillery, a small operation in Hopkinsville, is growing its team, increasing production and planning to enhance its event space. Copper & Kings, in Louisville, has been able to hire more workers and is preparing to expand its warehouse and add a new bar for guests. The Copper & Kings team recently shared with me that tax reform is "one of the most important initiatives [the Senate] could pursue to help create jobs for small businesses in Kentucky."

My Democratic colleagues failed to block tax reform last year, and now they want to just keep arguing about it. They even propose to repeal it and roll back Americans' tax cuts, but entrepreneurs across the country are loving our new 21st century Tax Code. They are using it to expand operations and to create jobs.

It is hard to argue with results—not that it has stopped our Democratic friends from trying, and I am sure they will continue to try. But Republicans will stay focused on taking steps like these and raising a glass to America's small businesses.

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. MARKEY.** 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. MARKEY.** Mr. President, today is a monumental day. Today is the day

the U.S. Senate votes on the future of the internet, the most powerful platform for commerce and communications in the history of the planet. Today, we show the American people who sides with them and who sides with the powerful special interests and corporate donors who are thriving under this administration.

Today, we vote on my Congressional Review Act resolution to save net neutrality. Net neutrality may sound complicated, but it is actually very simple. After you pay your monthly internet bill, you should be able to access all content on the web at the same speed—no slowing down certain websites, no blocking websites, and no charging you more to exercise your 21st century right to access the internet. It is as simple as that.

If that sounds like common sense, you are not alone. In fact, according to a recent poll, 86 percent of Americans support net neutrality. This isn't a partisan issue; 82 percent of Republicans support net neutrality.

Every day, we are told that this country is more divided than ever, that our differences outnumber our similarities. Well, the American people agree on net neutrality. They agree that the internet is for everyone. They agree that we cannot afford to blindly trust a few internet service providers—AT&T, Comcast, Verizon, Charter—to put consumers first. Yet, once again, the Trump administration has neglected the will of everyday Americans and given a gift to the rich and the powerful.

In December, the Trump Federal Communications Commission eliminated the very rules that prevent your internet service provider from indiscriminately charging more for internet fast lanes, slowing down websites, blocking websites, and making it harder and maybe even impossible for entrepreneurs, job creators, and small businesses—the lifeblood of the American economy—to connect to the internet.

The Trump Federal Communications Commission picked clear winners and losers when it repealed net neutrality. When the Federal Communications Commission decision takes effect on June 11, Big Telecom will have new tools to inflate profits, but Americans and small businesses that use the internet to do their jobs, communicate with each other, and participate in civic life will be left defenseless.

Don't be fooled by the army of lobbyists marching the Halls of Congress on behalf of the big internet service providers. They say that we don't need these rules because the internet service providers will self-regulate. Blocking, throttling, paid prioritization—these harms are alarmist and hypothetical, they say. Well, that simply is not the case. These practices are very real, and in a world without net neutrality, they may become the new normal. But don't just take my word for it. Let's look at the facts.