

exactly—exactly—the kind of partisan stalemate that we are now experiencing and avoid a 12-bill omnibus. The agreement laid out specific top-line numbers and ruled out poison pills—the agreement we all reached just a couple of months ago.

With respect to Presidential transfer authorities, the agreement that we all agreed to 2 months ago specifically stated that “current transfer funding levels and authorities shall be maintained.” The President’s transfers authorities as they relate to border funding, or anything else, were to remain exactly as they existed in current law. This is the deal we signed off on just 2 months ago. The deal just simply preserves the status quo that was established by bipartisan legislation last fiscal year. The same transfer authorities, by the way, would also be preserved if Democrats tank the appropriations process and we end up with a continuing resolution. That was the deal. Democrats were onboard. I entered the terms into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and both the Speaker and the Senate Democratic leader posted the terms of the deal in their press release, but now our Democratic counterparts have gone back on their word.

Contrary to the agreement, Democrats are now insisting on poison pills and, thus, blocking the resources and certainty our men and women in uniform need.

While Senate Democrats block defense funding, House Democrats continue to hold up USMCA and the 176,000 new American jobs it would create. All their time and energy seems to go to House Democrats’ 3-year-old impeachment journey and the unfair, precedent-breaking process by which the House has conducted its inquiry so far.

Last week, House Democrats passed their first votes on impeachment and codified their irregular process. They passed a resolution that fails—fails—to provide President Trump the same rights and due process that past Presidents of both parties have received.

Here is what the Democrats’ resolution effectively says: No due process now, maybe some later, but only if we feel like it. I repeat: No due process now, maybe some later, but only if we feel like it.

Well, while we wait for our Democratic counterparts to come back to the table and allow this body to complete urgent bipartisan legislation, we are going to continue confirming more of President Trump’s impressive nominees and giving the American people the government they actually voted for.

FIRST AMENDMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on another matter, I have come to the floor frequently in recent months to warn about dangerous anti-speech, anti-First Amendment headwinds blowing out of Washington, DC. I have warned about proposals from our

Democratic colleagues that seemed tailor-made to chill the free exchange of ideas and make it more difficult for Americans to engage in political speech.

Just a few days ago, on October 23, I explained how the threat of heavy regulatory burden has already “frightened media platforms into rejecting political ads altogether. It’s a textbook example of policy designed to reduce the amount of free speech in this country.”

Then, 7 days later, here is what happened. Twitter announced that their platform will ban all political ads. The online platform is banning advertisements for candidates for office and political campaigns.

What is more, they say they are also banning issue ads, which do not even reference a specific campaign but merely seek to give one perspective on a subject.

Twitter’s leadership has tried to produce a rationale for banishing paid political speech. The argument boils down to the same misunderstandings that have been used to undermine free speech for decades.

Here is what Twitter’s CEO said: “We believe political message reach should be earned, not bought.” This kind of surface-level argument may sound good at first, but it quickly gives way to an arbitrary process of picking winners and losers in the competition of ideas. Here is what I mean: Twitter’s new rules would seem to forbid either a small liberal nonprofit or a small conservative nonprofit from putting money behind an issue ad to amplify their perspective. But what about the press? Will media corporations large and small remain free to buy paid advertising to promote editorials and opinion writers? Will cable news networks and national newspapers remain free to advertise their political speech?

It would seem that Twitter will either have to ban opinion journalists and the press from advertising their own work or else create an enormous double standard that would just amplify the already privileged speakers who already possess multimillion-dollar platforms. It would just help clear the field for those elites by denying the same tools to fledgling speakers who are not already famous.

Consider this: Back in July, the CEO of Twitter praised two Democratic Presidential candidates in a Twitter post of his own. This gentleman has 4.3 million followers. It seems fair to conclude that these subscribers have not followed him solely due to the stand-alone merits of his commentary but in part because they are interested to hear from a powerful person who runs a hugely influential company. And, of course, Twitter has worked hard and spent money for years to grow its business and make itself famous—efforts that have raised the profile of its CEO. There is nothing wrong with that, but it illustrates the impossibility of any top-down standard to determine who has earned an audience.

How many millions of dollars go into publicity campaigns for Hollywood actors or musicians or media personalities? How many millions of dollars in advertising and corporate strategy have made CNN, FOX, MSNBC, and the New York Times into what they are today? When these people and these institutions speak out on politics, are they using megaphones they have earned or megaphones that have been bought? Obviously, such distinctions are impossible to draw. This is exactly why the act of free speech is not separate from the resources that make speech possible. Let me say that again. This is exactly why the act of free speech is not separate from the resources that make speech possible.

Twitter’s announced policy would not level the playing field. It would only reinforce echo chambers. It would prevent a local candidate on a shoestring budget from using a small amount of money to promote a tweet so more of his neighbors can learn about his campaign. It would seemingly reserve a special privilege for major media corporations, while denying nonprofits the same opportunity. Such a policy would not bolster our democracy. It would degrade democracy. It would amplify the advantage of media companies, celebrities, and certain other established elites, while denying an important tool to the Americans who disagree with them.

My personal view is that the American people do not need elites to predetermine which political speakers are legitimate and which are not. I believe that holds true whether the elites live in Washington or Silicon Valley or anywhere else.

Obviously Twitter can set whatever policy it wants. It is a private sector company. But companies respond to incentives. It is easy to see the influence of Washington and leading Democrats behind this announcement—pretty easy. My Democratic colleagues have threatened to impose huge regulatory liability on platforms that run political ads. And now a prominent platform has preemptively decided that allowing certain kinds of political speech is more trouble than it is worth. It does not serve our democracy for Democratic leaders to chill or suppress the free exchange of ideas through Federal policy. It does not serve our democracy for private sector leaders to take away a crucial tool that helps less prominent speakers make their case to the American people.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 4842

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4842) to authorize the Secretary of State to provide funds for a United States pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, and for other purposes.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lee Philip Rudofsky, of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas.

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

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

S. 1699

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last Friday was an exciting day. I was home in Sioux Falls, SD, to mark a huge milestone for the city and for South Dakota—the unveiling of Sioux Falls' first 5G small cells. By the end of this month, Sioux Falls will have a working, albeit limited, 5G network—one of the first cities in the entire country to have one.

Most people take internet access for granted these days. We assume that anywhere we go, we will be able to access our GPS, check Facebook, or send a text message. But the truth is that there are still areas in the United States where it can be difficult to get reliable internet access. Some of those areas are in South Dakota. That is why expanding access to broadband internet in rural communities has been a priority of mine since I came to the Senate. While it can be nice to turn off our phones and take a break, in this day and age, Americans need reliable internet access.

More and more of the business of daily life is being conducted over the internet, from scheduling appointments to figuring out the shortest way from point A to point B. The internet has already become an integral part of commerce. Small businesses and farms in areas without dependable access miss out on a lot of opportunities that most businesses take for granted.

Both as chairman and as a member of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, I have had the chance to draw attention to the state of broadband access in rural communities. I have conducted numerous hearings with testimony from rural broadband providers, farmers, Tribal representatives, and Federal officials both in Washington and in my home State of South Dakota.

Over the past several years, we have seen the number of Americans lacking access to broadband decrease significantly, but there is more work that needs to be done. With the advent of 5G technology, we now have to expand our efforts to make deploying 5G technology to rural communities a priority.

Most of us think today's internet is pretty fast. We get traffic updates that are basically in real time. We receive emails seconds after they have been sent. We stream our favorite shows at home or on the go. But 5G will make 4G look like dialup. It will deliver lightning-fast speeds up to 100 times faster than what today's technology delivers. That is hard to imagine. After all, as I said, today's technology seems pretty fast, but 5G will enable near-instant responsiveness from our phones and other devices.

However, 5G is about a lot more than streaming more shows on more devices or receiving emails instantly. In addition to being up to 100 times faster than current speeds, 5G will be vastly more responsive than 4G technology, and we will be able to connect 100 times the number of devices that can be connected with 4G. Because of this, 5G will enable massive breakthroughs in healthcare, transportation, agriculture, and other key industries.

5G will bring new opportunities and benefits to rural communities in particular. 5G will pave the way for the widespread adoption of precision agriculture, which uses tools like robotics and remote monitoring to help farmers manage their fields and boost their crop yields. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that precision agriculture will reduce farmers' operational costs by up to \$25 per acre and increase farmers' yields by up to 70 percent by the year 2050. 5G will also make it easier for residents of rural communities to access business and educational opportunities and long-distance healthcare.

The technology for 5G is already here, and it is actually being implemented, as Friday's event in Sioux Falls demonstrates.

There is more work to be done before 5G is a reality across the United

States. In order to deploy 5G, wireless providers need access to sufficient spectrum, and they need to be able to deploy the infrastructure needed to support the technology in a reasonable and timely manner.

Last year, the President signed into law my bipartisan MOBILE NOW Act. It was legislation that I introduced to help secure adequate spectrum for 5G technology. Earlier this year, Senator SCHATZ and I reintroduced the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act to address the other part of the 5G equation, and that is infrastructure. 5G technology will require not just traditional cell phone towers but small antennas called small cells that can often be attached to existing infrastructure, like utility poles or buildings.

While the Federal Communications Commission, under Chairman Pai, has modernized its regulations on small cell siting, there is more work to be done, and that is where my bill, the STREAMLINE Act, comes in. The STREAMLINE Act will expedite the deployment of small cells while respecting the role of State and local governments in making deployment decisions.

Importantly, it will make it more affordable to bring 5G to rural areas by addressing the costs of small cell deployment. 5G has tremendous promise for rural areas, but it will only deliver on that promise if we ensure that 5G cells are actually deployed in these areas. I am proud that we have made a good start in South Dakota. Sioux Falls' mayor, Paul TenHaken, has worked aggressively to remove barriers to telecommunications investment in Sioux Falls.

Nationally, we urgently need to take action to remove the final barriers to large-scale 5G deployment. While we have made good progress in securing low- and high-band spectrum, China and South Korea are far ahead of us in opening up midband spectrum to 5G. If we don't want China or South Korea to win the race to 5G and seize the economic benefits that 5G will bring, we need to substantially increase the amount of midband spectrum available to U.S. companies, and we need to do it quickly.

We also need to take action on legislation such as my STREAMLINE Act to pave the way for the widespread deployment of 5G infrastructure. America can lead the world in the 5G revolution. The technology is here. We just need to take the final steps to bring 5G into our communities.

I look forward to continuing to work to support the nationwide deployment of 5G with all of the benefits it can bring to the American people.

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