

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, it should come as no surprise that I might have a different point of view than the Democrat leader when it comes to the issue of net neutrality. If you look at what has happened since the FCC ruled on this, there were all these terrible apocalyptic predictions that were made about how speeds were going to slow down, the internet was going to slow to a crawl, and you wouldn't be able to do basic applications anymore, none of which have happened.

Obviously, we all believe—I certainly do, and I think most of my colleagues on this side believe—that if you want to have an open and free internet, that is a good thing, and if there are concerns about blocking or throttling or slowing speeds in some way, the Congress should be heard from on that because what we have had now for several years is this ping-pong effect. When one party is in power, they change the rules to suit their desires, and then the other party comes to power and changes it. Then you have all this litigation that goes on in the courts, which doesn't help anybody. All that does is bog things down and generates a tremendous amount of cost, and nobody's interests are served by that.

So if there is a concern, and I have articulated this on many occasions to my colleagues on the other side, to work with us on a legislative solution where Congress can step in and put clear rules of the road in place when it comes to the internet—making sure we have an open and free internet—we are prepared to do that, but that is not something the Democrats have been interested in doing.

They would rather have this heavy hand of government that slows this innovation down, all these wonderful things that are happening in our economy right now—the race to 5G, which obviously is critically important to so many sectors of our economy—could be dramatically impeded if you had the heavy hand of government, the heavy hand of regulation, which has been advocated by our colleagues on the Democratic side for some time, if that became the norm.

When President Trump was elected, and Chairman Pai was made Chairman of the FCC, and we had a Republican FCC which did away with the heavy-handed regulations of the previous administration, we heard all these apocalyptic predictions coming from the Democrats about all of the horrible things that were going to happen to the internet. I can tell you that my experience, I think, is like most Americans. I can continue to download applications. I can continue to scroll and to see the things I want to see and to toggle back and forth between different websites in a way that I did before. It just flat hasn't happened. So they are trying to come up with a solution for a problem that does not exist.

That said, we would be happy to work with them. We want to put clear rules of the road in place, but that is not what they want. They want the heavy hand of government and the heavy hand of regulation strangling what has been one of the most remarkable economic miracles of the last half century, if you look at what the internet has done in terms of productivity in this country.

#### APPROPRIATIONS

Madam President, I am very pleased to hear that a deal has been reached to finally advance the 2020 fiscal year National Defense Authorization Act.

Every year, Congress takes up the National Defense Authorization Act to authorize funding for our military and our national defense. Like last year's NDAA, this year's bill focuses on rebuilding our military and ensuring that we are prepared to meet 21st century threats.

While many take it for granted that we have the strongest military in the world, in recent years, our military advantage over near-peer adversaries has eroded. Budgetary impasses, combined with increased operational demands, left our military undermanned, under-equipped, and ill-prepared for the conflicts of the 21st century.

In November of 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission released a report warning that our readiness had eroded to the point where we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China, and the Commission noted that we would be especially vulnerable if we were ever called on to fight a war on two fronts. That is not a good position to be in. Restoring our readiness has been and must continue to be our top priority.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act continues our efforts to rebuild our military. It invests in the planes, the combat vehicles, and the ships of the future, including the Joint Strike Fighter and the future B-21 bomber, which will be based at Ellsworth Air Force Base in my home State of South Dakota. It authorizes funding for research and development and advanced technology. It also focuses on ensuring that we are equipped to meet new threats on new fronts, including in the space and cyber domains. Of course, this bill invests in our most valuable resource—our men and women in uniform.

The National Defense Authorization Act authorizes a 3.1-percent pay increase for our troops, which is the largest increase in a decade. This is not only something our troops have earned, it is also an important way to increase retention in an All-Volunteer Force.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act also focuses on addressing the recent significant health and safety issues with private on-base housing. It contains measures to support military spouses seeking employment and increased access to childcare on military installations.

I am glad we are finally on track to get this important legislation done. The final bill, of course, like most legislation, is not perfect, but it will help ensure that our military receives the resources it needs to meet current threats and to prepare for the threats of the future.

I am also encouraged by the fact that it looks like Democrats have decided to work with us to get fiscal year 2020 Defense appropriations passed before Christmas.

Needless to say, the 2020 Defense appropriations bill, like the authorization bill which I just referenced, is critical legislation that authorizes the funding for current and future military priorities. It provides funding to support that pay increase for the men and women who keep us safe. It provides the funding for the weapons and equipment our troops need right now to carry out their missions, and it provides funding for the equipment and technology our military would need to defeat the threats of the future.

It provides funding for missile defense, for research and development, for ships, for planes, and for combat vehicles to update our aging fleets. It also provides funding for our allies, including \$250 million in military assistance for Ukraine. This is a critical national security bill, and it needs to be enacted as soon as possible.

It is unfortunate that we couldn't get this legislation done sooner, before the start of the new fiscal year in October. Delaying defense funding has left our military short of the resources it needs and unable to start important new projects. So I am glad that, at long last, the Democrats are finally willing to work with us on this important legislation. It is time to get this bill done so we can get our men and women in uniform the resources they need without further delay, as well as uphold our national security commitments to our friends and to our allies.

I hope negotiations will continue to move forward and that we can get this legislation to the President's desk within the next 2 weeks, before the Christmas holiday.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### WYOMING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE DAY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor as we celebrate today, in Wyoming, the 150th anniversary of Wyoming's women's right to vote—150 years. Before we even became a State, women were voting in Wyoming. Today, at our State capital building in Cheyenne, there is a huge celebration of people from around the

State and around the country celebrating this historic day.

Many people watching today may not know the history of what happened 150 years ago. Yesterday afternoon, Senator ENZI spoke on the Senate floor and outlined some of that history. I am so proud of my home State's amazing record in advancing this entire issue and concern and allowance of women's voting.

Women in Wyoming were the first in the Nation to use the right to vote. That is a fact. Wyoming women have been voting for 150 years. On December 10, 1869, Wyoming took a giant leap forward for women's equality. We are called the Equality State. This is a lot of the reason why.

Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon, in a ceremony this morning at our State capital in Cheyenne, is proclaiming today Wyoming Women's Suffrage Day. Wyoming is the first place in the country to pass a law securing women's right to vote, as well as the right not just to vote but to hold public office.

The people of Wyoming spoke loud and clear 150 years ago today. We stood with women 50 years ahead of the rest of the Nation. Wyoming was a territory back then. Our State had not yet joined the Union. That didn't happen until 1890. Still, that is when we earned the proud name of the Equality State.

Wyoming earned far more than the name. By leading the fight for women's rights, Wyoming has forever earned a hallowed place in the books of history. Nobody embodies that legacy more than Wyoming's Louisa Ann Swain. On September 6, 1870, Louisa Swain of Laramie, WY, became the first woman in the United States to vote in the general election. By casting her historic ballot, she claimed a great victory for women everywhere.

It is a tremendous heritage that we celebrate today. Wyoming truly is the Nation's trailblazer for women's equality. In fact, "Equal Rights" is our State motto.

On November 19, the Senate unanimously passed the Wyoming Women's Suffrage Day resolution. Senator ENZI and I cosponsored the resolution to commemorate today's 150th anniversary. Now the entire Nation can join in celebrating Wyoming's groundbreaking law.

Then, 20 years after the law's passage, Wyoming refused to enter the Union as a State unless we had equal voting rights, men and women. There was a big fight about it in Wyoming and in the Nation's Capital. When standing on principle became a major sticking point, Wyoming stuck to its guns on women's equality and actually ended up delaying becoming a State over this very issue.

On March 26 of 1890, Wyoming statehood legislation narrowly passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The measure passed the Senate a few months later, but part of the debate on the floor of the House of Representatives had to do with Wyoming women

actually voting in our then territory and now State.

President Benjamin Harrison signed Wyoming's statehood into law on July 10, 1890, upholding women's rights. Wyoming was technically the 44th State to enter the Union, but Wyoming really is the first State when it comes to women's equality. Wyoming put women first even before statehood.

Back home, 2019 is the "Year of Wyoming Women." Our State is paying tribute to our strong women leaders. We had the great honor of electing the first woman Governor, Wyoming's 14th Governor, Nellie Tayloe Ross. Wyoming boasts many more female firsts. These include the first woman to serve on a jury and the first female justice of the peace, Esther Hobart Morris. Wyoming also claims the first all-female city government. These pioneering women leaders were elected in 1920 in Jackson, WY. The Jackson press dubbed them "the petticoat government." So we celebrate 150 years of equal rights in Wyoming and 100 years for women nationwide.

In 1919, Congress passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women's suffrage. This hard-fought legislative victory would ensure women's full participation in our democracy.

To mark this 100th anniversary, President Trump recently signed into law the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemorative Coin Act. I had the privilege of cosponsoring this legislation that was introduced by Senator MARSHA BLACKBURN from Tennessee. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate. I made sure that Wyoming's Esther Hobart Morris was among the suffragettes honored in this legislation.

All Americans owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Nation's extraordinary women leaders of the past, the present, and today as we pause to remember where it all started 150 years ago in the trailblazing State of Wyoming, the Equality State.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, now I would like to turn to a different topic. I come to the floor today as the Democrats in the House and in the Senate are obsessed with obstruction because they are obsessed over impeachment and are obstructing everything else.

We have only a week left to fund the government, to pass "America First" trade deals, and to support our military. Still, there is another priority issue that we need to address. We must provide relief, in my opinion, from costly ObamaCare taxes. There are several of those that are impacting our citizens around the country.

Last week, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare released a report on healthcare spending. The report finds that health insurance costs grew in 2018 by a larger number than they had the year before.

Why does CMS believe that the rates of insurance actually have gone up additionally? Well, it is because of a couple of taxes.

One is the health insurance tax, or the HIT tax. It is in the Obama healthcare law. It is an unfair tax that has increased insurance premiums for small business owners and for seniors. That is why I have been a longtime opponent of this health insurance tax. Democrats need to help us get rid of the tax. They need to end it.

The second ObamaCare tax we must repeal is the so-called Cadillac health plan tax. The Cadillac tax affects millions of Americans who are covered through work, especially union workers. On December 5, a broad group of unions and employers wrote the Senate leaders urging a repeal.

This is what they said. The union leaders and supporters urged the repeal, and this is what they wrote to the Senate leaders:

The consequences of inaction are serious. Many millions of working Americans will pay more out of pocket . . . or face reduced health coverage.

We need to end this Cadillac tax now.

The third tax we need to repeal is the medical device tax. Really, it is a tax on innovation. The medical device tax is going to restrict patients' access to new lifesaving technologies.

Without congressional action, the health insurance tax and the medical device tax are going to take effect again in 2020 and the Cadillac tax in 2022. It is time to repeal these punishing taxes. We need to do this to protect patients and working families all across the country.

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

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

#### AGRICULTURE

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I come before the Senate today to recognize a historic milestone in the Colorado agricultural community. The Colorado farm bureau is celebrating 100 years of representing farmers, ranchers, rural communities, and every aspect of agriculture in Colorado.

I grew up in the Eastern Plains, the very heart of agriculture. In fact, the county I grew up in is one of the largest corn-producing counties in the country and, certainly, economically speaking, one of the top agricultural communities in the State.

Our livelihood, our neighbors—everything—depend on agriculture. In fact, when there is a downturn in agriculture, it is not just the next day that our community feels that. It is that next hour that the community feels the impact. It is the same with a good agriculture economy. It is not just tomorrow that we will feel the impact, but immediately we will feel the impact.

I grew up working in a family farm equipment dealership where you got to