

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 7 minutes and Senator MARKEY for up to 5 minutes prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

NOMINATION OF ANNA M. GOMEZ

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss Anna Gomez, one of President Biden's FCC nominees. If confirmed, she would give the Democrats a majority at the FCC that would enable them to impose a radical leftwing agenda, including investment-killing and job-killing so-called net neutrality rules, otherwise known as "Obamacare for the internet."

I strongly oppose her nomination, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. The FCC exercises vast power over how Americans communicate and access information. It also has a history of abusing vague statutory provisions to pursue partisan policy goals. In the wrong hands, the FCC could go down a dark path of censoring speech and engaging in regulatory overreach.

Under current Democrat FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel's leadership, that threat is not merely hypothetical. The FCC has engaged in unprecedented abuses of power, such as killing the multibillion-dollar Standard General-TEGNA transaction without a Commission vote, attempting to expand the Universal Service Fund spending in defiance of clear statutory limits, and holding valuable 2.5 gigahertz spectrum licenses hostage.

Even more alarming, the FCC is now entertaining requests by radical leftwing groups to revoke a broadcast station's license for alleged "misinformation" and turning a routine FCC license renewal proceeding into a truth commission, an alarming assault on the First Amendment. And that is without a Democrat majority on the FCC. With a majority, there is no telling what regulatory excesses the Chairwoman could inflict—from forcing antiquated telephone monopoly rules on the competitive broadband industry to micromanaging providers' rates and terms of service, to imposing crippling new legal risks on American companies through "disparate impact" lawsuits.

Make no mistake, a vote for Anna Gomez is a vote for regulating the internet as a public utility. Ms. Gomez has publicly supported the reinstatement of the heavyhanded Obama-era net neutrality rules that would make the internet more expensive and slower for American households, despite privately confessing that Democrats had engaged in wild "hyperbole" in opposing the repeal of net neutrality.

Rather than giving reasons for the reinstatement of the failed net neutrality rules, she claims she simply wants "robust authority" over the internet. In other words, the power to regulate companies' pricing and terms

of service and to collect billions of dollars in new taxes from them and from you, the consumer, all at the expense of investment and innovation and consumer choice.

She has also refused to disavow the ongoing efforts to impose investment-killing "disparate impact" liability on American broadband companies. And she has given noncommittal answers to my requests for commitments to improve transparency and accountability at the FCC.

Ms. Gomez has a history of failing to protect taxpayer interests. In the Obama administration, she had a senior leadership role in implementing a wasteful \$4 billion broadband grant program. In one egregious example, funding from a \$100 million project in Colorado was used to build a third fiber connection to a single school of 11 students. But by far, most concerning in Ms. Gomez's history is her tweets concerning the use of government power to police so-called misinformation.

For instance, she retweeted a claim made by Democrat Congresswoman CORI BUSH, who is a member of the radical leftwing squad in the House, that Trump engaged in a "targeted mass disinformation campaign against 3.5 million Black voters in 2016" for the purpose of voter suppression.

In addition, she tweeted enthusiastically in support of efforts by the Defense Department's research wing—known as DARPA—and the Federal Government to crack down on so-called disinformation. At this point, it is, sadly, well known that the Biden administration has repeatedly trampled on the First Amendment to silence opposing views.

The White House Press Secretary publicly bragged that they were "in regular touch" and "flagging problematic posts" for social media companies and threatening new legislation if those companies did not heed the censors. And the Biden DHS tried to create its own "ministry of truth" before a public backlash shamed them into disbanding the effort.

Amid these First Amendment assaults, as well as recent efforts at the FCC to deplatform a FOX broadcast station, it was critical to gain clarity into Ms. Gomez's views on free speech, "disinformation," and the FCC's role in such matters.

Unfortunately, she gave vague answers to my questions and did not reassure the Commerce Committee that she would actively oppose censorship at the FCC.

Confirming Ms. Gomez would harm taxpayers, broadband investment, innovation, and most importantly, our First Amendment freedoms.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to oppose her nomination.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today in support of President Biden's nomination of Anna Gomez to be a commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

Americans need an FCC fully equipped to deliver affordable high-

speed connectivity, strengthen local broadcasting, foster spectrum innovation, and promote emerging technologies. Ms. Gomez will deliver on these priorities.

While she has dedicated much of her career to public service, working in various roles at the FCC, serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary at NTIA, and at the National Economic Council during the Clinton administration, she has also worked in the private sector.

For 3 years, she served as the vice president of State and Federal regulatory, government affairs for Sprint Nextel, and for 9 years, she worked at Wiley Rein, as part of the law firm's telecommunications practice.

Ms. Gomez will focus on ensuring affordable, reliable broadband across America's cities, suburbs, and rural communities. In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that for healthcare, education, labor, and so much more, broadband is a necessity.

For this purpose, Congress allocated \$65 billion for broadband in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including \$42.5 billion allocated based on the FCC's broadband maps. Ms. Gomez has pledged to work to improve the accuracy of these maps and deliver broadband to all.

We also need to lower the cost of broadband deployment. By leveraging our existing electrical grid infrastructure, we can build out more middle mile capacity. This will spur competition and help lower the cost of broadband.

While Congress invested \$1 billion to create a middle mile grant program at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the demand for this funding was more than seven times the amount available. We must do more.

Given her experience working at NTIA, Ms. Gomez has unique expertise in middle mile broadband deployment issues.

The FCC also plays an important role in sustaining local news. Local stations provide trusted on-the-ground reporting that informs the public and strengthens our democracy.

Ms. Gomez understands that we must protect local broadcast news and has pledged to delve into what the FCC can do to protect it.

She will also fight to ensure that the United States remains a leader in global spectrum policy. As countries like China compete for spectrum leadership, we must develop smart spectrum policies that promote national security and innovation.

We know the FCC has a crucial role in making sufficient spectrum available for wireless innovation and our federal agencies' critical missions.

Over the past year, Ms. Gomez has worked hard to prepare the United States for the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference and develop a comprehensive U.S. global spectrum strategy. She has also built a strong team that is well-informed and

well-equipped to represent U.S. interests in spectrum policy.

Some of my Republican colleagues have complained that they did not have an opportunity to meet with the nominee or that we should not confirm her until the World Radiocommunication Conference is over.

It has been 100 days since Ms. Gomez's nomination and 57 days since the committee's vote. Ms. Gomez has been available, willing, and eager to meet with all Senators to discuss her qualifications for the role.

The State Department also has extremely qualified experts who can step in for Ms. Gomez, just as she has planned for.

Anna Gomez has the knowledge, skills, and qualities to be an FCC Commissioner. I am proud to support Ms. Gomez's nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of Anna Gomez, President Joe Biden's nominee to serve on the Federal Communications Commission.

The FCC is one of the premier, expert Agencies in the Federal Government, responsible for overseeing the wires and the radio waves that have become the backbone of our economy and our communities.

But since the beginning of the Biden administration nearly 1,000 days ago, the Agency has been hamstrung in implementing critical communications priorities due to the absence of a fifth Commissioner. With Ms. Gomez as a Commissioner, that will finally change. The Federal Communications Commission will have the power to take on the big-dollar interests that seek to block critical consumer protections at every turn.

I support Ms. Gomez's nomination because I know she is ready for these fights. She knows that today broadband is not a luxury. Like running water or heat, broadband is an essential utility. Without high-quality and affordable broadband, students cannot learn, small businesses cannot reach new customers, entrepreneurs cannot innovate, and seniors cannot access telemedicine. The FCC's authority must reflect the essential nature of the internet in American life, and that is exactly what Ms. Gomez will provide.

With three Democratic Commissioners, the FCC can act swiftly to restore net neutrality and protect a free and open internet. My Republican colleagues will say that Congress should act on net neutrality instead of the Federal Communications Commission, but their Big Cable and Big Tech industry allies will be in their ear with crocodile-tear arguments about an out-of-control Agency usurping the will of Congress.

Well, if Republicans really want to take on this problem through legisla-

tion and not administrative action, then they should be prepared to join me when I reintroduce my net neutrality legislation in the coming weeks. They can be on record supporting internet freedom or siding with the broadband behemoths.

It has been nearly 6 years since the Trump FCC repealed net neutrality. We cannot wait any longer for Republicans to come to their senses. We must confirm Ms. Gomez so that the FCC can act without delay.

We must also confirm Ms. Gomez because the FCC must address other critical communications issues, including technology accessibility for people with disabilities, protecting local community media, and closing the homework gap.

I am particularly concerned about the future of the \$7 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund, which I passed during the pandemic. Over the past 2 years, thanks to the Commission's hard work, the Emergency Connectivity Fund has provided laptops, tablets, and internet services to more than 17 million students and teachers. Those resources are particularly critical for Black and Brown and immigrant and low-income populations who often lack access to the internet at home.

Unfortunately, this program will soon be out of money, potentially disconnecting millions of students and driving a deeper wedge into the digital divide. We cannot let that happen.

I stand ready to work with my colleagues to extend this essential funding, and I know that Ms. Gomez, like Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel, will be a fierce advocate for students at the Commission so that we can keep closing the homework gap and provide every child with access to the 21st-century tools they will need.

We stand at a critical moment to ensure a just broadband future for everyone. We need Anna Gomez on the Federal Communications Commission. She has the knowledge, the values, and the judgment the Commission needs.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her nomination.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON GOMEZ NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Gomez nomination?

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 222 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	Kelly	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Capito	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Lujan	Smith
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Collins	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warnock
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Welch
Feinstein	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Fetterman	Padilla	Wyden
Gillibrand	Peters	Young
Hassan	Reed	
Heinrich	Rosen	

NAYS—43

Barrasso	Graham	Ricketts
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hagerty	Romney
Braun	Hawley	Rubio
Britt	Hoeben	Schmitt
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	Lummis	Tuberville
Cruz	Marshall	Vance
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	
Fischer	Paul	

NOT VOTING—2

Booker	Moran
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). 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.

The President pro tempore.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

EASTERN WASHINGTON WILDFIRES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, last month, the Gray and Oregon Road wildfires in Eastern Washington caused serious devastation and forced thousands of people to evacuate, including members of my family and members of my staff. While folks on the ground are still assessing the awful scope of the damage and what resources our communities need to recover and rebuild in the aftermath, we already know that these fires burned tens of thousands of acres; destroyed hundreds of buildings, including over 350 homes; and, tragically, the fires were responsible for two deaths.

My heart goes out to the many families whose lives have been upended by these horrific fires, including our selfless firefighters, some of whom lost their homes to the flames while they were working hard to defend others'. I am incredibly grateful to all of our firefighters who have worked around the clock for weeks to get these fires under control. And I am also grateful to so many other first responders who helped keep our families safe from the blazes—law enforcement officers who raced door-to-door warning people as the fires approached, dispatchers who