

economies, and improving safety and cyber security. While serving as chairman, Tom Carper took on the critical responsibility of coordinating the board and the CEO, making sure that Amtrak was responsive to the needs of its customers: the American public.

Throughout his life, Tom took on many positions that show the kind of leader he really is. He was a small business owner from Macomb, IL, serving as the town's mayor for over 10 years and then as director of a regional economic development plan. From these positions, Tom gleaned firsthand knowledge about economic development in the Midwest—knowledge he brought with him to Amtrak. Prior to that, Tom served our Nation in the U.S. Army in both Thailand and Vietnam.

Tom had an acute understanding of how passenger rail service could improve lives. He used that knowledge to modernize our transportation system.

Tom is a great leader and an even better person. In his role, he faithfully honored his Central Illinois roots and showed what midwestern work ethic really looks like.

I want to thank Tom Carper for his years of dedicated service to America's rail infrastructure. Every American who uses Amtrak owes Tom Carper a debt of gratitude. I wish Tom the best of luck in the next well-earned chapter of his life.

Luckily for Illinois and our Nation, our representation on Amtrak's board will continue with the mayor of Normal, IL, Chris Koos. A committed leader, Chris has the longest running term of any mayor in his city's history. It is only right that he will be replacing Tom's recordbreaking tenure on the Amtrak board.

Chris's confirmation has been long awaited. He was first nominated in 2020. Two years later, at my recommendation, President Biden renominated Chris to the Amtrak board of directors. After more than 3½ years, finally—finally—he was confirmed. Through no fault of his own, he was caught up in some—how should I say?—strategic planning in the future of the Amtrak board, but he finally got the job.

The Midwest will be well represented with Chris Koos on the Amtrak board. He has been a powerful voice in the Illinois transportation sector for years, and he has an intimate understanding of the importance of passenger rail to communities in Illinois, the Midwest, and across the country.

Similar to Tom, Chris is a small business man from a midsized community. He owns a business where he sells running shoes and bicycles. From movement on foot and bike to movement by rail, I think it is safe to say Chris has a passion for supporting people on the go. That passion will allow him to tackle the challenge of serving on Amtrak's board with grace, creativity, and intelligence. Chris will be a great asset when it comes to the future of Amtrak.

I am honored to call him a friend, and I congratulate him on this exciting new journey ahead.

Leaders like Tom Carper and Chris Koos make me feel honored to represent the great State of Illinois.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is anything that keeps my Democrat colleagues up at night, I am pretty sure it is the specter of some aspect of society not being regulated by the Federal Government. How else to explain Democrats' tendency to propose heavy-handed government solutions to address nonexistent problems?

There is no better example of a heavyhanded government solution to a nonexistent problem than the Biden Federal Communications Commission's recent push to impose burdensome net neutrality regulations.

So what is net neutrality, Mr. President? Well, at its core, it is the idea that internet service providers shouldn't prioritize or block certain internet traffic at the expense of other traffic. Understood in that way, it is a concept that has strong bipartisan support, but that is not what we are talking about with the Biden FCC's proposal.

The Biden FCC wants to use the idea of net neutrality as a cover to assert broad, new government powers over the internet using rules that were designed for telephone monopolies back during the Great Depression. The net neutrality regime the Biden FCC is contemplating was actually put in place once before—during the Obama administration—and the results were predictable.

The Obama FCC's measure opened the door to a whole host of new government regulations, including price regulations, and broadband investment declined as a result. That was a problem for Americans generally, who benefit when the United States is at the forefront of internet growth and expansion. It was particularly bad news for Americans in rural States like South Dakota. Getting broadband to rural communities is already more challenging than installing broadband in cities and suburbs, and the possibility of heavier regulations acts as a further disincentive to expanding that access.

Fast-forward to 2017. The FCC, under Chairman Pai, voted to repeal the heavyhanded net neutrality regulations passed by the Obama FCC—a prospect that was greeted with absolute hysteria from Democrats. We were told that the internet as we know it

would disappear, that providers would slow speeds to a crawl, and if you can believe this, that our freedom of speech was threatened.

Well, I don't think I need to tell anyone that none of what Democrats predicted came to pass. As anyone who has been on the internet lately knows, the internet has not just survived but thrived. Innovation has flourished. Competition has increased. The internet remains a vehicle for free and open discourse. And internet speeds have not only not slowed down, they have gotten faster and faster. Despite the explosive growth and internet usage during the pandemic, American networks had no problem keeping up with demand, delivering the reliable service Americans have come to expect.

Let's contrast that with Europe, where internet regulation is much more heavyhanded and Europe struggled to deal with increased internet usage. In fact, European service providers slowed internet speeds to maintain connectivity.

The United States is now a leader in adopting next-generation telecommunications services like 5G and advanced Wi-Fi while Europe struggles to keep pace.

So, as I said, the Biden FCC's net neutrality proposal is a solution—and, I would argue, a heavyhanded government solution—in search of a problem, and it is likely to create problems where none currently exist.

Given the Biden administration's demonstrated willingness to use its regulatory power to advance its far-left economic and social agendas, it is not hard to imagine the Biden administration using its new net neutrality powers to shape Americans' internet experience for its own ends. The FCC's net neutrality proposal could hasten the demise of the free and open internet it is allegedly—allegedly—supposed to protect.

On the practical side, as FCC Commissioner Carr—a Republican appointee who opposes this proposal—has pointed out, there is also good reason to fear that this measure could drive up Americans' internet costs and open the door to new taxes and fees on Americans' internet bills.

Of course, as I said, last time heavyhanded net neutrality regulations were put in place, broadband investment declined in response, and there is good reason to believe that the same thing would happen this time. The United States could quickly lose its place as a leader in internet technology, and Americans could lose out on the benefits of living in a country that is at the forefront of internet innovation.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I have to emphasize again just how much the Biden FCC's proposal is a solution in search of a problem. There is absolutely no reason—no reason—for heavyhanded government interference in a free, open, and thriving sector of our economy. There is every reason to oppose a proposal that would

not only threaten to raise prices and decrease innovation but would give the Federal Government and the Biden administration a dangerous amount of control over Americans' internet experience.

I have led a letter with more than 40 of my colleagues calling for the Biden FCC to abandon this just incredibly ill-advised proposal, and I will continue to urge my colleagues of both parties to oppose this alarming measure because if the Biden FCC has its way, we may soon find ourselves dealing with the very opposite of net neutrality.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Lujan). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IRAN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier this week, the American people received the tragic news that two Navy SEALs died during a nighttime raid near Somalia.

Somalia is a world away from here, but what happens in that region has a direct impact on us here at home because one of these Navy SEALs was from the great State of Texas.

These men and their brave comrades were seizing a vessel that was carrying Iranian-made arms intended for Houthi rebels in Yemen.

I know, after 9/11, there was a famous country-western song—I think “Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning)” —and one of the lines was, ‘I don’t know the difference between Iraq and Iran.’

Well, the truth is, the American people have had to learn a lot about world geography, unfortunately, because things that happen far away from our shores have a direct impact on us and on the potential for regional war or worse to break out.

The Houthis, as some may know, are a terrorist group. They occupy Yemen, which is south of Saudi Arabia and right next to Oman. You may have to get out your maps to place it. But this is a terrorist group that has been engaged in a civil war in Yemen for many years now and has attacked Saudi Arabia and has been subject to retaliation by Saudi Arabia and the Emirates for some time now. But, unfortunately, they have proven to be enormously resilient.

They have a disturbing ideology. They are known for their saying “God is great. Death to America. Death to Israel. Curse on the Jews. Victory for Islam.” That is their motto. There is no mystery about their intentions.

In the wake of the invasion by Hamas on Israel on October 7, the Houthis have escalated their attacks in the region—again, supplied by Iran with weapons that they have used not only

to attack Saudi Arabia but also to try to attack Israel and American forces in the region.

They have launched dozens of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships traveling through the Red Sea and bound for the Suez Canal. This is an area of the world where international commerce is so important. Goods that flow between the Red Sea and the Suez Canal do everything from provide us with the commodities that make our lives better to provide the energy necessary for countries around the world. The U.S. Central Command described these attacks as a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security.

The Houthis only have the resources to carry out these attacks because of the support they receive from Iran. Like Hamas, another Iranian proxy, the Houthis and other terrorist groups in the region are armed, trained, and funded by Iran.

On the evening of January 11, a heroic group of Navy SEALs seized a vessel carrying ballistic missiles and cruise missile components destined for Houthi forces. They prevented the Houthis from receiving even more weapons that could be used to target U.S. forces or commercial ships in the region.

Now, you can imagine that boarding an enemy vessel is a dangerous and difficult mission, but doing so in the dead of night, in rough seas, while loaded with heavy equipment, is even more perilous.

While boarding the ship, Special Warfare Operator 2nd Class Nathan Gage Ingram, a Texan, fell into the Arabian Sea. Following SEAL protocol, Special Warfare Operator 1st Class Christopher Chambers heroically jumped in, trying to save him. Well, unfortunately, the U.S. Navy and our allies have now conducted a thorough search and rescue operation, covering more than 21,000 square miles over 10 days, but sadly their bodies were never recovered.

These men represent the very best of our country. They exemplify the courage and selflessness that generations of American servicemembers have embodied. Our hearts go out to the families of these brave Navy SEALs who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.

But this is a reminder of the immense risks our servicemembers face every single day. They sacrifice time away from their loved ones and place their lives on the line to keep our country safe. Given the chaos unfolding around the world, which seems to be getting worse and worse, the threats they face continue to grow.

As we all know, in recent months, the tensions in the Middle East have escalated dramatically. As I mentioned, Hamas carried out an attack on Israel on October 7. In Israel, they call this their 9/11—like the attack on September 11, 2001, that killed 3,000 Americans. The Houthis are disrupting, as I said, global commerce and freedom of

navigation. Iranian-supported proxies in Iraq and Syria are attacking U.S. forces. Hezbollah, in Lebanon, is launching constant attacks on northern Israel.

Terrorist threats are intensifying throughout the Middle East, and the common thread uniting all of these attacks is Iran. Iran is the head of the octopus, and its tentacles of terror extend throughout the region. There is Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank, and Shiite militias in Syria and Iran. Iran provides its terrorist proxies with funding, weapons, and training to enable the types of attacks we have seen in recent weeks. This chaos threatens to destabilize the Middle East even further and possibly start a much wider conflict.

Given the growing tensions in the Middle East, one of America's top priorities must be to reestablish deterrence. Iran needs to pay a price for using its proxies to attack the United States and U.S. interests.

This is absolutely vital to the future of Israel. Iran is a country driven by a dangerous ideology that calls for the destruction of Israel, and it will bleed the Iranian people dry in order to sustain that fight.

But, as we know, Iran's ambitions do not end with Israel. The Supreme Leader once labeled the United States as Iran's “number one enemy.” Until recently, Iran felt intense pressure from the United States. The Trump administration withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and placed sanctions on hundreds of businesses and individuals who helped finance Iran's illicit activities. It also brokered the historic Abraham Accords, which served as a major blow to Iran as like-minded nations in the region normalized their relationship in order to counter their common adversary: Iran.

The maximum pressure strategy dissolved as soon as President Biden took office. It seems to be the guiding philosophy of President Biden that if President Trump did it, President Biden will undo it, and that is what happened here.

Less than a month into his Presidency, President Biden made the foolish decision to remove the government designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group. Given the brazen attacks that I have mentioned, President Biden has now reversed that decision last week but only partially. The President has only redesignated the Houthis as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist.” He also failed to reclassify them as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” as they were before President Biden took office. The truth is, I doubt this will have any impact on the Houthis. Unfortunately, it is just one of many examples where President Biden's weakness toward Iran has not provided greater peace and stability but more dangerous circumstances. It actually has emboldened our adversaries.