

the absence of clear rules prohibiting such deals.

This is disappointing. As Comcast noted in its letter, voluntary commitments from individual companies would not serve as a substitute for rules applicable to all broadband providers. Such pledges would, however, send a strong signal to the American people that broadband providers share their commitment to an open and equal Internet. It is unfortunate that these companies were unwilling to make that commitment—presumably because they know that if fast lanes are allowed in the future, market forces may drive them and other ISPs to consider such deals to maximize profits at the expense of competition online. This “race to the bottom” scenario is exactly why we need clear rules in place prohibiting such agreements. I appreciate that Comcast went further than the other ISPs by expressing support for my legislation with Representative DORIS MATSUI of California, which would require the FCC to ban paid prioritization agreements so that all ISPs are subject to such a rule.

The concern over a pay-to-play Internet that advantages the largest corporations over smaller players is very real. I was disappointed that some Internet service providers in their responses brushed aside these concerns dismissively. It is not “demagoguery,” as Verizon suggested in its response, when small business owners like Cabot Orton of the Vermont Country Store say that they simply want to see an Internet that continues to treat all businesses equally. It is not a “phantasm” when independent content creators like actress Ruth Livier acknowledge that they would not have been able to start their Web sites if they had to pay for priority access to reach viewers online or compete against players who did. These are real concerns, shared by millions of Americans. Their voices should not be casually and callously dismissed because they cannot afford to pay lobbyists to advocate on their behalf at the FCC.

The FCC is continuing its important work to craft new open Internet rules. For months, I have been clear that I will not support any rules that do not ban Internet fast lanes. I have spent much of this year listening to Vermonters and others to hear firsthand about how a pay-to-play world would harm the Internet ecosystem.

The responses to my letter highlight one element that unites all of those involved in the net neutrality debate—the need for certainty. Broadband providers understandably want to know the rules by which their actions will be governed, and consumers want certainty that their Internet service will continue to provide them unfettered access to lawful content online. Recently, some broadband providers like AT&T have threatened to stop investing in further innovation and deployment of broadband in the name of uncertainty. Of course, they could decide

to provide certainty on issues like paid prioritization at any time regardless of the FCC’s actions by making the pledge to consumers I have called on them to make.

I will continue my call for broadband providers to listen to their customers and pledge to never engage in paid prioritization. While they did not do so in response to my letters, it is never too late for them to make that commitment to the American people.

TRIBUTE TO JIM FRANSEN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, there is no shortage of attorneys here in Washington, DC, but some of the most talented lawyers work in the Office of Legislative Counsel here in the Senate. Drafting legislation is often a complicated exercise. It takes years under the mentorship and tutelage of others to grasp the difficult process of drafting complicated bills. At the end of this Congress, after nearly 40 years of service, legislative counsel Jim Fransen will retire. His family’s gain will be the Senate’s loss.

Jim first joined the Office of Legislative Counsel in 1975—the same year Vermonters elected me to the Senate. He served as an assistant counsel and a senior counsel, rising to become the finance and tax team leader. For the last 15 years, he has served as legislative counsel. He is the second longest serving legislative counsel, and his career has seen many accomplishments.

Jim has been one of the key drafters of Federal tax legislation since joining the office in 1975. He has had a hand in drafting such monumental bills as the Tax Reform Acts of 1976 and 1986, the Economic Recovery Act of 1981, the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. He helped to draft the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and he was a key drafter of the most sweeping health reform legislation in generations, the Affordable Care Act.

Through Republican and Democratic administrations, Republican and Democratic Senate majorities, Jim has been a true public servant. I know in his retirement, he will enjoy spending time with his family: his wife Margaret, his three daughters and his two grandsons. Wherever his retirement travels may take him, Marcelle and I wish him the best.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN SEARLES

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, one of Vermont’s most dedicated public employees, Brian Searles, is retiring after 45 years of service to both State and local government. As a police chief, city manager, airport director, and two tenures as the Vermont secretary of transportation, Brian is a model of commitment both to his work and to his State.

For the past 4 years Brian and his team at the Vermont Agency of Trans-

portation have overseen vast improvements in the State’s infrastructure. In 2008 nearly 20 percent of Vermont’s bridges were structurally deficient. By 2013 that number was reduced to just 8 percent. Additionally, in 2008, 36 percent of Vermont’s pavement was rated in “very poor” condition, but through his work and the support of Governor Shumlin, Brian and his team were able to improve that number to 21 percent. Brian has also remained committed to supporting Vermont’s rail infrastructure, spending the time necessary to apply for and win Federal grants. This necessary funding allowed Vermont to realize the final stages of completing the Western Rail Corridor project designed to connect Rutland to Burlington, as well as upgrade track to complete high speed rail service between Saint Albans and Montreal. The success of these projects could not have happened without Brian’s leadership.

Brian and I have tackled many projects together, always working to accomplish big goals for Vermont’s transportation and infrastructure needs. In August of 2011, Tropical Storm Irene hit the State, wiping out 500 miles of roadway and forcing 33 bridges to close in Vermont’s worst natural disaster in recent history. Brian helped to bring our rural devastation to a national stage by testifying before the Senate’s Committee on Environment and Public Works and then led his team to successful rebuilding efforts. For this, Vermonters will always be grateful.

About a year ago, Brian approached Governor Shumlin with a resignation letter in his pocket. Looking at the wealth of knowledge and historic improvements in the agency’s work during Brian’s tenure, the Governor prevailed upon him to remain at the helm until the end of the Governor’s second term. Brian accepted the call, finished the year, and is now leaving the Vermont Agency of Transportation as a well-respected arm of Vermont’s State government.

Marcelle and I join all Vermonters in thanking Brian for his years of service to the State and wish him and his family the very best as they begin a new chapter of their lives.

RECOGNIZING MARY POWELL

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, Vermont is a national leader in sustainable energy. Green Mountain Power, with its CEO and President Mary Powell at the helm, is the perfect example of the progress our State has made and should serve as an example for the rest of the Nation.

Mary was recently named the 2014 Power-Gen Woman of the Year. Mary is a leader and trailblazer in the power industry. She took the reins of Green Mountain Power, GMP, in 2008 and has transformed it into Vermont’s “energy company of the future.” Mary is truly committed to the idea that energy can spur socioeconomic change for

Vermonters and strives to help people save money and move toward more renewable sources. Under her leadership, GMP has launched successful initiatives to improve the company's quality of service, through providing low carbon, low cost, and reliable power to Vermonters.

Recently, Mary led Green Mountain Power in becoming the first utility in the world to receive B corporation certification. B corporations use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. Mary wants Green Mountain Power to not only be the best utility in the world but the best for the world.

Mary is among the very few women who have achieved this level of success in the utility industry. I am grateful for the work she has done for the State of Vermont. She is redefining success in the energy industry, and I congratulate her on receiving the 2014 Power-Gen Woman of the Year Award.

I ask unanimous consent that the Burlington Free Press article "Mary Powell Named Woman of the Year" recognizing Mary for her achievements be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Dec. 10, 2014]

**MARY POWELL NAMED WOMAN OF THE YEAR
POWER GENERATION INDUSTRY GROUP CITES
HER ADVANCEMENTS, OUTREACH**

The leader of Vermont's largest utility was named woman of the year at her industry's largest trade show this week.

Mary Powell, president and CEO of Green Mountain Power in Colchester, was named Power-Gen 2014 Woman of the Year. Powell was selected because of how she has advanced the power generation industry and for her community involvement.

Powell received the award at the 2014 Power-Gen Woman of the Year Awards Dinner Monday in Florida as part of Power-Gen International, the largest trade show in the world for the power generation industry. She is scheduled to give the keynote address today during the Women in Power Luncheon.

In a statement, Powell called the award an "incredible honor."

"Energy can be transformational in moving customers and society to a more secure and environmentally sound future, and we are determined to lead the way," Powell said. "GMP is partnering with customers to accelerate the pace of change as Vermont's energy company of the future."

Jennifer Runyon, chairwoman of the Women in Power Committee, called Powell a "trailblazer."

"We hope that our award will inspire young women to not only consider careers in the power industry, but also show them that dedication and hard work can lead to brilliant results," Runyon said in a statement.

David Crane, president and CEO of NRG, a large utility with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey, and Houston, said in a statement that Powell "starts with the heretical notion of giving the modern-day energy consumer what they want—which is affordable, convenient, clean and storm-resistant energy—and then uses her native intelligence, charm and drive to make sure it happens."

GMP said it is collaborating with NRG to make Vermont a "leader" in sustainable energy. Beginning early next year, the partner-

ship will bring "innovative, cost-effective clean energy products and services to Vermont," according to a statement from the Vermont utility.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MARCUS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I rise today to honor the work of my friend George M. Marcus, an accomplished businessman and philanthropist.

Born in Euboea, Greece, George Marcus and his family immigrated to the San Francisco Bay area in 1945. George was raised in California and attended college at San Francisco State University. After graduating with an economics degree in 1965, George began working in real estate. Always with an emphasis on client satisfaction, analysis, and evaluation, he founded Marcus & Millichap Real Estate Investment Services in 1971. His business acumen and willingness to innovate have spawned a variety of subsidiaries that have expanded his company to include 35 states.

George's successes are not limited to the real estate industry. A noted entrepreneur, Mr. Marcus has been called "a modern day Midas with an uncanny ability to create successful companies" by one news outlet. Indeed, his ventures range from SummerHill Homes, a bay area homebuilder, to a partnership in two enormously popular Greek restaurants: Evvia Estiatorio in Palo Alto and Kokkari Estiatorio in downtown San Francisco.

Mr. Marcus' legacy extends far beyond shareholders and profits into the heart of his own community. He has served on the California State Universities Foundation Board of Governors and the Board of Regents of the University of California. On the board he worked to preserve the financial viability of higher education for residents. He has also supported San Francisco's de Young Museum since its foundation and established San Francisco State University's International Center for the Arts.

Remembering his heritage, George has contributed generously to the Greek-American community and its institutions. In 2008, he was instrumental in organizing the National Hellenic Society to provide resources to promote Hellenic ideals. For his numerous services, he has been awarded the AXION Award, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the Elios Cultural Achievement Award, the Patriarch Athenagoras I Humanities Award, and the Aristeio Award of the American Hellenic Council of California.

This past month George was honored by the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco with the Theofanis Economidis Award for his work on behalf of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States. I congratulate George on this much-deserved recognition.

But for all of the awards and accolades from the private and public sectors, George Marcus' greatest accom-

plishment is his family. George and his wife Judy are the proud parents of four children—Mary Jane, John, Demetra, and Alexandria.

In 2011, George gave the commencement address at San Francisco State University. In his remarks he quoted Aristotle, urging the graduates to remember that "excellence is a habit. . . . For your success in whatever you pursue, you must take to heart and be the best you can . . . and don't forget to give back." George Marcus has made excellence his habit at home, in his community and in the corporate world. He has achieved unparalleled success in nearly every walk of life. Yet he has never forgotten to give back. He has never stopped being the best he can.

Today, I, along with the Senate, congratulate him on his well-deserved award from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco, but more importantly, we thank George Marcus for all he has done for the people of this nation.

On a personal note, George Marcus has been my friend for three decades. It is a friendship I will always cherish.

REGARDING THE EXCISE TAX LEVIED ON LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with my colleagues.

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

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I rise to discuss an amendment regarding natural gas that was adopted earlier this year by the Senate Finance Committee and was included in the Senate-passed highway bill. I wish it were included in one of the year-end measures this body is passing in the next few days. This is a bipartisan proposal that passed the Senate overwhelmingly and deserves to be enacted before we conclude this Congress.

The measure—a bill we worked on with Senator BURR from North Carolina—would equalize the tax treatment of liquefied natural gas, LNG, and diesel fuel. The federal highway excise tax on both diesel and LNG is set at 24.3 cents per gallon. However, because LNG contains less energy per gallon than diesel fuel, on an energy equivalent basis, LNG effectively pays 170 percent of the diesel tax rate. The current highway excise tax treatment of LNG is a disincentive to investment in new LNG trucks and fueling stations, and should be corrected to encourage capital investments and help diversify transportation fuel choices.

LNG is a transportation fuel used for large trucks and some marine and rail vessels. The fuel has attracted the attention of fleet operators due to its low cost at the pump and reduced environmental impact. LNG produces significantly lower levels of toxic emissions than diesel fuel, including lower levels of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide. Using LNG instead of