

and our economy each and every day. Even a few decades ago, the technologies many of us take for granted today would have been totally unfathomable.

But the success of the Internet wasn't an accident. Today's internet—and all the incredible innovations that utilize it—aren't the product of unnecessary and burdensome government regulations that hindered growth. Instead, they were the direct result of a bipartisan desire to create an environment of advancement—one that utilized a light regulatory touch. Innovators were free to create and develop what they wanted to, without having to think about complying with overbearing Washington regulation.

As the internet grows, so does the United States. Our Nation has led the world in internet technology, and citizens throughout the country and the world have enjoyed the benefits.

However, the previous administration seemed bent on subjecting the internet to a whole host of new regulations—rules designed in the age of the rotary phone and rooted in the railroad era of the 1800s. Through unprecedented government overreach, the Obama administration argued that this change would fix a problem. But there wasn't a problem that needed fixing.

Therefore at the behest of President Obama in 2015, the partisan majority at the Federal Communications Commission rejected our decades-old approach and reclassified broadband internet access. This overreach subjected it to new burdens and regulations and threatened the marketplace freedom and innovation that brought us the internet we have come to know today.

It shouldn't shock any of my colleagues to hear that an increase in burdensome regulations created uncertainty for businesses of all sizes and negatively impacted investment. In the last 2 years, broadband investment has suffered a serious decline, even though many Americans, including large numbers in rural States like Kentucky, lack access to crucial internet services at home.

Earlier this year, President Trump changed direction from the previous administration. He elevated Ajit Pai to serve as the Chairman of the FCC, and tomorrow, the Commission will vote to repeal the misguided 2015 rule.

Chairman Pai submitted a proposal to restore freedom to the internet and to classify broadband internet access once again as an information service, just like it was until 2015.

When the FCC votes tomorrow, they will be voting to return the internet to a consumer-driven marketplace free of innovation-stifling regulations.

Opponents of Chairman Pai's plan have expressed their concerns about unfair or disruptive business practices that may hurt consumers' access to the internet. However, his proposal will actually restore the Federal Trade Commission's authority to protect consumers and police companies that engage in unfair practices.

Chairman Pai's proposal will also require internet service providers to clearly disclose how they treat their customers' data so that consumers can choose the services that are right for them.

I look forward to their vote in support of the open internet and to Congress's actions in the future to keep the internet open for consumers in a lasting way.

Before I continue onto another matter, I feel that it is necessary to take a moment to discuss the vitriolic and divisive debate over this topic.

As my colleagues know, I am a strong defender of political speech, and I have fought for decades to protect the rights of all Americans to question government policies. However, the discussion on this issue took on a new tone. While the First Amendment protects political speech, it is no excuse for bad conduct.

Instead of debating the effects of a proposal, some of the far left engaged in personal attacks, even going as low as to promulgate attacks citing Chairman Pai's children. This type of behavior does nothing to elevate our Nation's discourse or forward a particular policy. I hope that we can all agree that this type of harassment deserves universal condemnation.

FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, on another matter, Madam President, over the last eight years, our foreign policy was guided by a Commander in Chief who wished to draw down conventional military power from across the globe. Iran, China, and Russia have sought to fill this vacuum and exploit the perception that America was withdrawing.

This Republican Congress has made a commitment to work with President Trump to rebuild our military and give our men and women in uniform the resources they need to face the challenges of a dangerous world.

We know there is more work to do in restoring our military's combat readiness and meeting the full needs of the force. Earlier this year, we passed a funding measure that was an important departure from the Obama years.

The President has renewed our commitment to Afghanistan, and is trying to train and equip a force that can meet the daunting challenge posed by North Korea.

To begin rebuilding our military, we ignored the Obama-era demand that any increase in defense funding must be equally matched to nondefense increases. We did that earlier this year, and we must do it once again.

As we continue to discuss a plan to fund the government, we must prioritize efforts to provide for our warfighters. The Defense Department suffered a disproportionate reduction under the Budget Control Act—one that has real consequences for readiness. If we are not able to come to a funding agreement, our military—and

many other critical functions of the Federal Government—will suffer intolerable budget cuts next year.

I hope that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will work with us in a serious manner to make sure that we are able to responsibly fund the government so that our military has the tools it needs to keep us safe.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, on one final matter, Madam President, later today, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act conference committee will host an open meeting to discuss its progress in resolving the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

The conferees have been working diligently to produce a report that both Chambers can vote on soon. Once they complete their work, Congress will be able to fulfill our commitment to the American people and deliver real tax reform.

For too long, the hardworking men and women of Kentucky and our Nation have endured a struggling economy and a broken tax code. Rates are too high. The structure is too complicated to understand, and it is too easy for the wealthy and the well-connected to exploit. Incentives are so nonsensical that some actually encourage corporations to ship American jobs overseas.

It is time for a change. Passing pro-family and pro-growth tax reform is the single most important action we can take right now to grow our economy and help the middle class get ahead.

Families deserve a tax system that works for them; and along with President Trump and his team, this Republican-led Congress is working to deliver. This is our chance to set a new course—to undo the damage that our outdated Tax Code has inflicted on the economy over the last decade.

For the Americans who were left behind by the Obama economy, this is our opportunity to provide relief. We want to make your taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. We want to bring investment and jobs back home and keep them here. The bottom line is this: We want to take more money out of Washington's pocket and put more money into the pockets of the middle class. I am confident the conference committee will finalize a bill that does just that.

It will also repeal ObamaCare's individual mandate tax, delivering relief to low- and middle-income Americans who have struggled under an unpopular and unworkable law.

In addition to this once-in-a-generation tax relief, our legislation will also provide for our Nation's energy future. By further developing Alaska's oil and gas potential, this bill will help create jobs, support energy independence, and promote our national security.

The forthcoming conference report represents our chance to provide a real

benefit to families and small businesses across the Nation. I am grateful to the members of the conference committee for their hard work to resolve the differences between the two bills. I look forward to voting for the final product soon.

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 Don R. Willett, of Texas, to be a Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ELECTION OF DOUG JONES

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as we know, last night a Democrat won in the State of Alabama for the first time in a quarter century.

Last night's election of Doug Jones was not only the repudiation of a candidate unfit to serve in this body; it was an affirmation of a candidate who represents the very best of public service.

I read Doug Jones' bio. One story stands out in my mind. As a second-year law student, Doug Jones skipped class to attend the trial of the Klansman ringleader of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church—an event, as we all remember, that shook the conscience of our country and helped launch a mighty movement for civil rights. Although a young Doug Jones was moved by the disposition of justice in that trial, he was left with the impression that other members of the conspiracy had escaped the reach of the law. So 24 years later, when Doug Jones became the U.S. attorney in Alabama, he pursued charges against two more Klan members involved in the bombing, winning their conviction, and delivered a long-delayed but mighty righteous justice.

Doug Jones deserved to win the race last night. He is a fine man, was an excellent candidate, and is going to make an outstanding Senator for the people of Alabama. I congratulate Senator-Elect Jones and look forward to welcoming him to this Chamber and our caucus.

Two additional points in regard to the election, which has a link to the Chamber here:

First, the election of a Democrat in such a conservative State, which hadn't had a Democratic Senator since 1996—they elected one in 1990, I guess—is a clarion call for bipartisanship. The American people are clamoring for us to work together, to eschew the politics of divisiveness and once again conduct our politics with civility, decency, and an eye toward compromise. That is what Doug Jones represented as a candidate, it is what he campaigned on, and his election should signal to all of my Republican colleagues that the American people, from the deepest red States to the deepest blue States, yearn for our politics to function again in a bipartisan way.

The election of a Democrat in such a conservative State is a clarion call for bipartisanship. The people of Alabama have spoken, and they have sent a message asking both Democrats and Republicans to work together to solve our greatest challenges. That is how Doug Jones campaigned. Roy Moore did not try to pursue any scintilla of bipartisanship, and it might have been one of the reasons he lost, particularly in the suburbs of Birmingham and other cities. I hope we in this body will take this election in earnest and pursue a course of bipartisanship.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

The election of Doug Jones should have another effect on this Chamber as well. It would be unseemly and imprudent to rush a massive piece of partisan legislation through this Chamber before Doug Jones is seated. To rush such a huge piece of legislation when the people of Alabama have just sent us a new Senator and try to jam it through before he gets here would be so wrong. Doug Jones will be the duly elected Senator from the State of Alabama in a few short weeks. The Governor didn't appoint him. The people chose him. It would be wrong for Senate Republicans to jam through this tax bill without giving the newly elected Senator from Alabama the opportunity to cast his vote. The people of Alabama deserve to have their representative in the Senate to debate the biggest issues of the day, and the tax bill certainly falls under that category.

Today, we Senate Democrats are calling on Leader McCONNELL to hit pause on his tax bill and not hold a final vote on it until Doug Jones is sworn into the Senate. That is exactly what Republicans argued when Scott Brown was elected in 2010. Referring to healthcare, Leader McCONNELL said it would be "gamesmanship" to pursue big-ticket legislation before Scott Brown was seated. He asked us to "honor the wishes of the people of Massachusetts." Leader Reid, in fact, acceded to that wish and waited until Scott Brown was a Senator before there were any further votes on healthcare. "We're going to wait until the new senator arrives until we do anything more on healthcare," he said.

As too often has happened, Senator McCONNELL does one thing when Republicans are in charge and a different thing when Democrats are in charge. Here is another example. McCONNELL says: New Senator—in that case, Scott Brown—slow down work on major legislation, and Reid acceded.

We are calling on Senator McCONNELL to do the same thing today. Let's see if he does. We are calling on Senator McCONNELL to do just as Senator Reid did—to honor the wishes of the people of a State that has newly elected a Senator and to wait to move forward on the tax bill until Senator Jones arrives.

If Republicans insist on barreling ahead—and I understand the pressure is on them from their hard-right multi-billionaire paymasters—they will be pouring gasoline on the fire. Their tax bill—written in back rooms, rushed through this Chamber with such recklessness—which gives enormous breaks to the wealthy and corporations while it raises taxes on millions, many of them in the middle class, is being roundly rejected by the American people. Poll after poll shows by ratios equal to, a little less than, or a little more than two to one that the American people reject this bill. They know what is in it. They don't know all of the details, but they know it favors the wealthy and powerful over them, over the middle class. They know that, even if they are getting a small tax break, the vast majority of the tax breaks go to the wealthiest and the most powerful, and they don't like it. Above all, they know this tax bill will clobber the suburbs, drastically cutting back on the State and local deductions and other deductions they cut back on, which will be a gut punch to millions of middle-class and upper middle-class Americans who live in the suburbs. They are the very same people who are turning away from President Trump, who helped to propel Doug Jones to victory last night, and who helped to propel Mr. Northam to be Governor of Virginia when his opponent Gillespie was calling for a \$10,000 tax break for the middle class.

The longer this bill sits behind closed doors, the worse it is getting. Rather than improving it for the middle class, they are cutting the rate further on the wealthiest of Americans, according to all reports—to reduce the top rate another 2.5 percent, only going to people who make over \$300,000 a year, while raising taxes on the middle class. What is going on in the heads of our Republican colleagues? Why would they do something that seems so wrong for America and so against what the American people want? We know why. The Koch brothers and the Club for Growth, funded largely by billionaires and millionaires, and all these other groups are fanatic: Just cut taxes on the rich.

I don't even hear them arguing for helping the middle class, except in TV ads that are deceptive, in my judgment. But they are doing it for that