

of the Federal Communications Commission; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I don't think the answer to the question is going to be a surprise to my friend from Massachusetts. I will only say this, and I will try to do it briefly. I have been amazed, over the last 1½ years and even longer, at the intense, overblown rhetoric about this issue of net neutrality and the hyperbole we have heard on the floor of the Senate and elsewhere.

About 1½ years ago, the FCC voted on the Restoring Internet Freedom Order. It went into effect. It repealed what most of us considered a heavy-handed approach based on a law that took effect back in 1934.

When the FCC implemented this new restoring internet freedom order back a year and a half ago, I was just astounded by what was being said by my friends on the left. One Senator warned that this was practically the end of Netflix, YouTube, and Amazon. Another cautioned:

They want to get rid of the Federal Communications Commission's net neutrality rules so that . . . Internet Service Providers can indiscriminately charge more for internet fast lanes, slow down websites, block websites, make it harder and maybe even impossible for inventors, entrepreneurs.

One tweet from my friends on the Democratic side said: "If we don't save net neutrality, you'll get the internet one word at a time." That quote got three Pinocchios from even the Washington Post.

These things never happened. As a matter of fact, people on the other side of the issue who actually have taken the position of the Senator from Massachusetts have admitted that ISPs are delivering on consumers' expectations. They are not throttling websites.

As a matter of fact, here is what has happened since the FCC order went into effect a year and a half ago: Broadband providers large and small have deployed fiber networks to 5.9 million new homes—the largest number ever recorded. More Americans are connected at higher speeds than ever before. Capital expenditures have rebounded from the slump they suffered when the internet was subjected to title II.

This should surprise no one because the internet has thrived during Democratic and Republican administrations and during Democratic majorities on the FCC and Republican majorities on the FCC when we have taken the light-touch regulatory approach.

The issue seems to be title II regulation of rates. I would simply say to my

brothers and sisters on the other side of the aisle that we can pass a law tomorrow afternoon providing Americans with all the protection they want from blocking, throttling, and preventing paid prioritization. What we will not do and what this President will not sign is legislation authorizing the Federal Government to set internet rates in the old 1934 Bell System of title II regulations. For that reason, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, despite the Republican objections today, Senator CANTWELL, Senator WYDEN, and I, and tens of millions of people across this country will not stop fighting until net neutrality is fully restored. Whether in the Halls of Congress or in the courts of our country, this is going to be a fight that is fought until it is finally won.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this Congress, I have the great privilege of cochairing the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control with the senior Senator from California, DIANNE FEINSTEIN. As more families across the country lose their loved ones to the scourge of opioids, the work of this caucus could not be more important.

Today, people in our country are more likely to die from an opioid overdose than a car crash, but that hasn't always been the case. Our country's opioid abuse epidemic began in the 1990s when pharmaceutical companies promoted aggressive pain management, assuring the medical community that patients would not become addicted to these drugs. As a result, doctors began to prescribe more and more of them. We know what happened next. In the decades since, we have faced a steady increase in opioid abuse and have undertaken aggressive efforts to address this epidemic.

There has been a concerted effort across the country to attack overprescribing of opioids in the hope of preventing more people from becoming addicted. But that alone cannot be our sole focus. Of the more than 70,000 overdose deaths in America in 2017, more than half were the result of heroin and synthetic opioids, not prescription drugs.

The more we step up our efforts to limit prescription opioid diversion, the higher the demand for other illicit drugs, many of which are funneled into our communities by criminal organizations operating across international borders. These groups run sophisticated drug trafficking operations, moving vast amounts of cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, and other illegal drugs through Central America and Mexico and into the United States. With Customs and Border Protection personnel spread thin because of the current humanitarian

and security crisis at the border, these criminal organizations have no problem exploiting the security gaps.

I can say confidently that without coordinated government response, the problem is going to get worse and worse, which means more and more Americans will die as a result of drug overdoses.

In the past, this caucus has examined everything from prescription drug abuse, to the expansion of fentanyl, to trafficking across our southern border. As these and other hearings have illustrated, there is no single contributor to this crisis and no silver bullet.

The opioid epidemic is called a crisis for a reason: It is pervasive and all-encompassing. We can't look at the problem through a soda straw, focusing only on how the drugs get here or how to more effectively treat those who are already addicted. We need to take a more holistic approach that focuses on reducing supply by reducing demand and eliminating the myriad of factors that fueled this fire.

The International Narcotics Control Caucus will hold a hearing this afternoon to examine how the U.S. Government can expand our international efforts against drug abuse and narcotics trafficking and take the first step toward developing a comprehensive strategy.

Our first witness will be the Secretary of State, Secretary Pompeo, whose Department works across the U.S. Government and with our partners around the world to combat this transnational crime. We look forward to hearing from him, as well as other experts on the second panel about the growing epidemic and what Congress must do, working in a bipartisan effort, to address it.

As I said earlier, our whole-of-government strategy must focus on supply and demand. Last Congress, we passed landmark legislation to combat the opioid crisis, which President Trump called "the single largest bill to combat a drug crisis in the history of the country." Through the collaboration of 70 bipartisan proposals in the Senate, this law aims to not only stem the tide of drugs coming across the border but to offer some support and hope to those suffering from drug addiction. It was a major bipartisan accomplishment and one that I hope we can continue to build on in this Congress because a great deal of work remains to be done.

Beyond supply and demand, we need to take aim at the criminal organizations that traffic drugs and engage in a whole host of criminal activity. As others have pointed out, these criminal organizations are commodity-agnostic—they will engage in human trafficking, migrant smuggling, money laundering, counterfeit goods, public corruption, and the list goes on and on. What they are really about is making money. They don't care anything for the migrants or the people affected by their crimes. The real kicker here is that while these criminal organizations are

perpetuating the opioid epidemic, fueling a cycle of violence, and abusing innocent civilians, they are growing richer and richer by the minute.

Targeting these organizations means more than stopping the flow of drugs into our country; it means ending a cycle of crime and violence and working together with Mexico and Central American countries to help them escape the savage grip of these criminal organizations.

Additionally, we need to strengthen security cooperation with our international partners so that they are able to more effectively fight side by side with us. Mexico and Central and South American nations often lack the ability to adequately counter the trafficking occurring within their borders, and corruption serves as a major roadblock in efforts to stop criminal activity.

There are a number of programs in place already—many of which began through the Merida Initiative—which have yielded positive results, but we need to look at all of these and make sure we understand what works and what does not work so we can justify the expenditure of U.S. taxpayer dollars in this fight. By strengthening and expanding these operations, we can help our southern neighbors fight drugs, crime, and corruption within their own borders, which would more effectively reduce the flow of drugs and other illicit goods moving across our southern border.

Finally, if we want any of these efforts to be sustainable, we can't just focus on law and order; we must look at ways to invest in economic development to help these countries build stronger economies. These are beautiful, vibrant countries that are also victims of endemic crime in the region. Helping them promote economic security will carry immense benefits for the entire region, and it is something we need to discuss more in the coming months.

Senator FEINSTEIN and I have worked together in the past on legislation to address the drug epidemic, such as the Substance Abuse Prevention Act, which is now the law of the land. This Congress, we will continue our important work together on the International Narcotics Control Caucus. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses this afternoon and engaging in a larger discussion—hopefully a nationwide discussion—about how we can reverse the devastation caused by the opioid crisis and drug overdoses in America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

FOREIGN AGENTS DISCLOSURE AND REGISTRATION ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, for nearly 2 years Special Counsel Mueller's investigation captivated Washington. Most of the media reporting focused on speculation and false allegations of a criminal conspiracy between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin. This reporting was fueled by critics eager to all but guarantee the President's guilt. After a very exhaustive investigation—and, of course, millions and millions of taxpayer dollars being spent by the Mueller investigation—many of those same critics still can't accept that Mueller and his investigative team of Democratic donors found no collusion or crime.

The continuing political noise over the last 2 years, however, risks drowning out critical siren warnings of another real threat—self-interested and surreptitious foreign influence in our political discourse. Mueller's team indicted dozens of Russians for a scheme to sow discord in American politics through our social media and the release of hacked emails. However, not enough attention has been paid to foreign interests secretly enlisting American cutouts to directly influence our laws, our public policies, and, most importantly, public opinion to destroy our social cohesion.

This is a very serious problem that should send shivers down the spine of anyone in government who meets with lobbyists. If lobbyists or public relations firms are pushing policy preferences at the behest of foreign powers and foreign interests, we ought to know about it.

This week I introduced legislation to strengthen and also fine-tune enforcement authorities to better expose clandestine foreign influence campaigns. My bipartisan bill, the Foreign Agents Disclosure and Registration Enhancement Act, will encourage greater compliance with a very often ignored requirement for lobbyists working on behalf of foreign entities to tell the U.S. people who they are working for. It accomplishes this by creating critical updates to one of our Nation's oldest lobbying disclosure laws.

Way back in 1938, Congress first passed a bill to accomplish a way to expose this foreign influence in America, particularly within our government. That bill passed in 1938 is called the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The bill was meant to unmask Nazi propa-

ganda and identify foreign attempts to influence Congress and the American public. Until recently, however, this Foreign Agents Registration Act has been seldom used.

Now—get this—only 15 violators of this act have been criminally prosecuted since 1966, and 1966 was the date when this law was last updated. Of course, now I am trying to update it again. About half of these prosecutions, of the 15, stem from the work of Special Counsel Mueller's investigation, though that is not due to the lack of foreign influence efforts to affect our Federal decision making.

As part of my oversight efforts, I first raised concerns about the shoddy Foreign Agent Registration Act enforcement in 2015. Now, I did this before Donald Trump launched his Presidential campaign. I did it when a former Clinton White House staffer and a lawyer for a Georgian political party failed to register as foreign agents.

I also raised concerns about work for Ukrainians by Paul Manafort and the Podesta Group, and about reports that the Democratic National Committee worked with Ukraine to undermine the Trump campaign. I raised concerns when the firm behind the discredited Steele dossier failed to register for its lobbying work to repeal U.S. sanctions against Russia.

Now, as it turned out, that is the same lobbying effort that was behind the bait and switch at the Trump Tower in June of 2016. I don't have to go into details about that Trump Tower meeting. That is a very famous and well documented meeting.

I even subpoenaed Manafort to testify at the Judiciary Committee hearing on lax Foreign Agents Registration Act enforcement, and I praised Mueller for dusting off the law that had been ignored by lobbyists and prosecutors for so long because they really didn't want the American public to know that they were working for a foreign country.

Now, that may sound like that is something illegal. What is illegal is that you don't tell the American people whom you are working for. It is not, as far as I know, illegal to work for the interests of another country, as they might have some legitimate interest in our policymaking, but the point is that the public ought to know whom they are working for.

Now, I talked about subpoenaing Manafort, and in the end Manafort, his colleague Rick Gates, and former Obama White House Counsel Greg Craig were among those indicted for violating this Foreign Agents Registration Act.

My Foreign Agents Registration Act oversight activities have been done without regard to power, party, or privilege. I happen to have a reputation as an equal-opportunity overseer to see that the laws are faithfully enforced, and I believe that this very act of registration of foreign agents ought to be better enforced and enforced equally.