

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Chairman Michael F. Doyle

Markup of 7 Bills

June 15, 2022

Good morning and welcome to my colleagues. I'm pleased that we are here today to do the important work of discussing, amending, and moving forward seven bipartisan bills that will, collectively, strengthen our government's management of spectrum and make our communications networks stronger, help protect people facing emergencies and crises, and promote wireless innovation.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for all of their hard work to reach agreement on the text of these bills.

I'd like to begin by discussing my bill with Representative Latta—H.R. 7624, the Spectrum Innovation Act. Not only does this bill reflect important policy goals—namely, returning the Department of Commerce to the driver's seat when it comes to managing federal spectrum, but will also, with the AINS Representative Latta will offer today, use proceeds from the auction required in the bill to fund programs that will have immense public benefit.

This includes providing the Federal Communications Commission with the funding it needs to rip and replace all of the suspect network equipment made by vendors that pose a national security risk. And it will also provide the public with secure, reliable, advanced 9-1-1 communications networks for times of emergency and disaster.

Sometimes a telephone call can't fully convey the important information to first responders, the way that a picture or video can. Next Generation 9-1-1 networks will allow these operations centers to communicate with the public in all of the ways we all communicate with one another.

That will save the lives of our fellow Americans, including police and fire fighters. We want to make sure this program is fully funded so that no community is left behind, and if the funding provided in this bill doesn't do the job, we'll keep pushing and fighting to make it happen.

We will also consider H.R. 7783, the "Extending America's Spectrum Auction Leadership Act of 2022" introduced by Representatives Davids, Joyce, Welch, and Johnson. This bill would extend the FCC's general auction authority for an additional 18 months, so it does not expire in September.

There has been a lot of public debate around how long this extension should be, and I would have liked to have seen it extended for longer. But this was the product of a bipartisan negotiation and is needed to ensure the FCC's authority does not expire in the middle of an important auction.

As we heard in our prior hearings this year, it is important to our continued global leadership on spectrum innovation that we provide certainty to the public, and this bill ensures that the FCC doesn't face tough questions about what they are able to do, or not, in the absence of express Congressional authority.

So I'm glad we are advancing this bipartisan bill to provide stability and certainty regarding the FCC's auctions.

We're also marking up two bills that advance our spectrum innovation goals. H.R. 5486, the "SMART Act" was introduced by Representative Guthrie. It requires the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information at the NTIA to develop and implement a framework to enhance the sharing of spectrum between federal entities and non-federal users, as well as between multiple federal entities. As we know, spectrum resources are only becoming more scarce, and this will help us share our federal airways more efficiently.

Also, H.R. 4990, Mr. Carter's "ITS Codification Act" provides statutory authority for the Institute for Telecommunication Sciences, a key part of NTIA that plays an important role in studying and testing a range of spectrum issues.

Regarding personal safety, I am pleased we are marking up the Safe Connections Act, introduced in the House by Representatives Kuster and Eshoo and in the Senate by Senator Schatz. H.R. 7132 provides important protections for survivors of horrible crimes like domestic abuse, sexual assault, and trafficking who share a mobile service account with their abusers.

This legislation will ensure these survivors can exit these plans without financial penalty, and also allows them to utilize the Lifeline or Affordable Connectivity Program as a back stop.

Finally, we are marking up two bills related to affordability and universal service. H.R. 4275, the "Ensuring Phone and Internet Access for SNAP Recipients of Act of 2021," introduced by Representatives Lauria and Katko, will help Congress and community partners better understand how to reach households eligible for Lifeline and A-C-P, since we know those programs are under-enrolled and could be helping more people.

Finally, Representatives Hayes and Veasey's H.R. 5400, the "Preventing Disruptions to Universal Service Funds Act" would exempt the Universal Service Fund programs from Antideficiency Act provisions to ensure programs that provide essential connectivity, like E-rate and Lifeline, can continue without disruption.

So, as you can see, we have some very important bills before us today and I look forward to discussing and then advancing them all to the full committee. With that, I yield back.