

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

Hearing on “Connecting America: Oversight of the FCC”

March 31, 2022

Welcome to today’s hearing to provide oversight of the Federal Communications Commission. I’m glad to have Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioners Starks, Carr, and Simington with us today. It is great to have you all here especially, now that the President finally took my advice and designated Ms. Rosenworcel as permanent Chairwoman of the commission.

It’s an incredible deserved honor and I think the bipartisan work of the commission during this period is a testament to that. I hope soon the Senate will confirm Ms. Gigi Sohn to bring the Commission to full strength. Ms. Sohn’s knowledge of communications policy and dedication to consumer protection are exemplary and the FCC and the American public will be well-served with her confirmation. I also want to commend all four of you and your outstanding bipartisan work to deliver for the American people as you await your fifth colleague.

The FCC has a broad mission regulating communications by wire, radio, satellite, and cable, with a mandate to promote competition, investment, diversity, and security in our nation’s communications networks. It is also the congressionally designated body to regulate commercial spectrum and make spectrum assignments.

The FCC should be applauded for tackling such a wide array of duties with the limited budget and staff it is afforded. Broadband is an essential, necessary service for Americans for their jobs, for schooling, for healthcare, and for civic participation in our country.

With this in mind, Congress has made historic investments through the CARES Act, the 2020 Omnibus, the American Rescue Plan, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to connect our schools, students, low-income households, tribal communities, and those in need of healthcare services.

This makes the FCC’s position as the national regulatory authority on broadband more important than ever. Under the bipartisan work of this FCC, enormous strides have been made in adoption of the Affordable Connectivity Program, nearing 11 million households signing up.

The Emergency Connectivity Fund has already put over \$5 billion dollars towards connectivity for our nation’s schools, libraries, and students.

I commend the Commission for getting this money out as quickly and efficiently. And now that the FCC has successfully overcome a bid protest, the commission can finally move forward with more of its broadband mapping activities, which will be crucial for the NTIA to disburse the \$42 billion dollars for broadband access in its “bead” program.

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As with our nation's other communications technologies, it is critical that the FCC ensure that the core principles of the Communications Act run throughout broadband policy: consumer protection, competition, universal service, and public safety.

The FCC should use all of its tools to reestablish its consumer protection authorities over broadband, including by prohibiting unfair and unjust practices and continuing to fight against robocalls and robotexts; it should promote competition in the broadband marketplace so consumers can benefit from choice and the expanded services and lower costs that competition brings; it should pursue universal service by ensuring that all consumers have access to reliable, affordable broadband and to prohibit practices that hinder broadband deployment; and it should continue its support of public safety and commitment to our first responders and law enforcement officials, and secure our networks from untrustworthy equipment.

Finally, I applaud your recent work with the NTIA on the Spectrum Coordination Initiative. Congress designated the FCC as the overseer of commercial spectrum and tasked it with determining the highest and most efficient use of spectrum. It has a long history of basing its decisions on the science and engineering facts brought before it, and we need to bolster its spectrum management processes that have made the United States the global leader in technology.

To that end, I hope we can revisit the lower 3 gigahertz band in a way to both protect the incumbent users AND maximize commercial use, as envisioned by the Spectrum Innovation Act. And Congress should reauthorize the FCC's authority to conduct auctions, particularly in light of the upcoming "two dot five" (2.5) gigahertz auction that is so important to 5G and rural wireless connectivity.

This Committee has entrusted the Commission with a great deal of responsibility and will take all of us working together to successfully connect all of our communities, protect our constituents, and ensure the continued leadership of the United States. Thank you again to the Commissioners for coming before us today.

I look forward to hearing their testimony. And now I recognize my friend, Ranking Member Latta.