

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Reauthorization of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act”
March 12, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

I want to thank our witnesses for coming today to discuss our draft of this must pass legislation. More than 1.5 million satellite television subscribers rely on the provisions of STELA that expire at the end of this year. The draft legislation that is the subject of our hearing will ensure that those subscribers continue to receive the service they have come to rely on.

There has been a healthy debate over what this reauthorization should and should not do, and we welcome continued input as this process moves forward. As we work to reauthorize STELA, it is important to remember that this is not the venue for comprehensive reform. As you know, the committee has embarked on a multi-year effort to update the Communications Act. This process will be driven by a thorough and thoughtful review of all aspects of today’s communications marketplace with the goal of updating our laws to better reflect today’s realities while leaving the flexibility necessary to foster continued innovation and growth. We hope and expect you all will be active participants in that process.

Thanks to the hard work of this subcommittee and input from the public and industry stakeholders, Chairman Walden has issued a discussion draft that offers practical, narrow reforms to the current video market while properly leaving comprehensive reform to the #CommActUpdate. I strongly support this draft and encourage others to do so as well.

In addition to extending the expiring satellite provisions, today’s draft also makes several targeted pro-consumer reforms to video laws and regulations. It repeals costly FCC rules that require CableCARDS in set-top boxes leased by cable companies. It removes a government guarantee of “sweeps week” protection in retransmission disputes. And it takes action to ensure that the FCC meets its statutory obligation to review and deregulate media ownership rules, before attempting to take additional regulatory actions against broadcast sharing agreements. The draft also helps to keep negotiations fair between broadcasters and pay-TV providers for retransmission consent.

These are well-considered, deregulatory reforms – the type of intelligent reforms that Congress should think about during the #CommActUpdate. We hope you’ll join us over the next few years as we dig in to review the state of the law and the state of the communications industry. For now, let’s not lose sight of the important goal today of reauthorizing STELA by the end of this year.

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