



COMMITTEE ON *DEMOCRATS*  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 30, 2015**

**CONTACT**  
**Christine Brennan — (202) 225-5735**

**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Subcommittee on Communications and Technology**  
**Hearing on “FCC Reauthorization: Improving Commission Transparency”**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

*April 30, 2015*

Thank you Chairman Walden and welcome Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner O’Rielly. I know you were sitting in those same seats just a few weeks ago—we appreciate your coming back.

Unfortunately, we are here once again to pick apart the FCC. This is the fourth straight hearing for this subcommittee where the Republicans have demanded FCC staff or commissioners spend their time before us. That does not count the steady stream of inquiry letters the Republicans have been sending to the FCC over the past few weeks. I am certainly committed to rigorous oversight of all of the agencies in our jurisdiction. But at some point that this oversight is simply political. This subcommittee can have a more proactive agenda including a sharper focus on consumer needs.

But today we are here to discuss the FCC's supposed lack of transparency. Many see these charges as a backhanded slap at the FCC for adopting strong network neutrality protections. And although none of these allegations have stuck, the Republicans have put forward solutions to resolve problems that are hard to find.

Nonetheless, I am willing to have the debate about whether we should modify procedures across all agencies. But these kinds of agency-specific procedural changes have several drawbacks.

First, they can give the public the impression that these are simply backdoor efforts to undermine popular decisions with which some members of Congress disagree.

Second, legal experts have repeatedly told us that agency-specific requirements invite lawsuits. They have explained that even small changes create large conflicts with long-standing legal precedent. These conflicts will no doubt lead to drawn out battles in court. And as we have heard over and over in this subcommittee, litigation unsettles the market and deters investment.

But despite our concerns with the Republicans' specific bills, Democrats are not the party of no. That is why the Democratic members of this subcommittee have put together our own plan. One that builds on the good work Chairman Wheeler has already done to improve the FCC's processes and will keep future FCC administrations fast, efficient, and transparent. Our

commonsense proposals would keep the FCC as agile as the industries it regulates without sparking years of legal uncertainty.

And our plan goes beyond the bureaucratic inner workings of the FCC. We believe that transparency should extend to the political process as well. That is why the Democratic plan includes a way to ensure that the public knows who is paying for expensive political ads on TV. For too long, mega-donors have been hiding behind the innocuous and misleading titles of their super-PACs. Americans deserve to know who is using the public's airwaves to influence political debates. Transparency should not stop at the doors of the FCC.

I am hopeful that these aggressive and political tactics against the FCC can end today.

Thank you.