



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

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Pallone Statement at Markup of FCC Reauthorization Legislation

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Communications and Technology Subcommittee markup of FCC reauthorization legislation:*

Thank you to the Chairman Blackburn and Ranking Member Doyle for having this markup today. I know that reauthorizing the Federal Communications Commission has been a top priority for the Chairman, and I appreciate that she has been open to working with us on it. The legislation before us today is better as a result of that bipartisan work.

For instance, the manager's amendment includes a bill from Congressmen Welch and Young to improve call quality for those living in rural America. It includes the Rural Wireless Access Act from Congressmen Loeb sack and Costello that will help ensure the FCC is supporting wireless internet access more efficiently.

We have also been able to incorporate the Improving Broadband Access for Vets Act from Congressmen McNerney and Kinzinger to ensure the FCC is doing all it can to get our Veterans online.

The reauthorization bill also includes Congresswoman Eshoo's RESPONSE Act to help first responders find someone when they call 9-1-1, and Congressman Engel's bill that makes sure our network operators have more relevant cyber-threat information.

This work is a good first start, but we still have critical work to do before I can support reporting this bill out of the full committee.

We must find a way to include the Viewer Protection Act in any final FCC reauthorization bill. A number of Democrats have put forward a bill that would make sure that television viewers or radio listeners will not lose signal as a result of the FCC's incentive auction. As we have seen repeatedly over the past few months, disasters can strike at any time, and when they do, television and radio broadcasters play a vital role in providing potentially lifesaving information.

For instance, right now in Puerto Rico some broadcasters have managed to keep their signal going. They are reaching out to the desperate and telling them where to find the very limited resources needed for survival. We cannot let these stations go dark.

Unfortunately, funding the repacking of stations is not enough—people still need to know how to find the new signal. Currently, the FCC does not have any funding to educate people about how to reprogram their televisions. So my priority going forward will be to include sufficient funds to educate consumers on how to make sure their televisions still work.

The Viewer Protection Act is an important bill, and we remain open to changes that will help garner additional support.

As we begin this markup, I urge my colleagues to support the managers' amendment, but I also want to make clear that the bill should not proceed to a full committee markup until we find a way to include the Viewer Protection Act.

Finally Madam Chairman, I was very disturbed to see that this morning the President issued a tweet that seemed to threaten broadcasters' licenses only because he disagreed with their reporting. This threat alone could intimidate the press and lead to skewed and unfair reporting. I therefore call on FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to immediately condemn this unwarranted attack. I also call on the Chair to announce publicly that he will not follow through on his orders from the President. Chairman Pai should not act in any way to undermine free speech on our airwaves.

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