

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Mike Doyle

Legislative Hearing on Four Communications Bills

March 22, 2018

Thank you Madam Chairman for holding this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us today.

Today we are considering four pieces of legislation. I'm happy that we've decided to take these up and hope that we can proceed with consideration of these bills under regular order.

In particular, I'm happy to see before us a bill by my good friend Peter Welch: H.R. 2903 the Rural Reasonable and Comparable Wireless Act. This bipartisan piece of legislation seeks to establish national standards for mobile service, mobile data service, and broadband services in rural America that are comparable to those in urban America. I know this is an issue that my friend and colleague is very passionate about. As this bill points out, under the Communications Act, Congress tasked the FCC with ensuring that rural areas had similar access and availability of service as their urban counterparts. I don't have to tell anyone here that we have fallen far short of that goal.

While we've done an enviable job of electrifying the rural parts of our country, we've fallen far short in getting broadband not just to people's homes, but to the areas they live, work, and commute. Get on a highway that isn't the I-95 corridor, and wireless service gets spotty fast. We need to make sure that people in rural America can get the same kind of widespread high speed access as we have in urban areas and along urban corridors.

I'm proud that Committee Democrats have proposed a plan with Ranking Member Pallone's Lift America Act that seeks to close this gap with \$40 billion dollars in capital investments.

Congressman Lance and I have also introduced the AIRWAVES Act along with a number of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle that would set aside 10 percent of the revenue from the spectrum auctions set out in the bill for the deployment of broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved communities in rural America.

Another bill we have under discussion today is Congresswoman Bernice Johnson's National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, which would require the FCC to work in coordination with SAMHSA to explore the feasibility of a three digit dialing code, similar to 9-1-1 or 3-1-1 for suicide prevention. This legislation passed by UC in the Senate, a seemingly rare feat these days, and I hope we can continue to move this important legislation forward.

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We are also discussing a bill on unlicensed radio broadcasts today. While I have heard anecdotes that this is a problem on the rise on major cities like New York and Miami, I'm concerned that the proposed solution is to increase fines for these broadcast tenfold.

Years ago I worked with Congressman Terry on Low Power FM radio legislation. We saw that there was an issue of illegal broadcasts, but also that there weren't many opportunities for communities around the country to express themselves on the air. We sought to address this by increasing the opportunities available to them by opening a Low Power FM application window, which resulted in thousands of new stations around the country. As we consider this legislation I think we need to balance the legitimate concerns of broadcast licensees with the limited opportunities for expression available to some communities. My hope is that as we consider this bill, we can take an approach that addresses both groups' needs.

The last bill that we are considering today, is Congressman Latta's H.R 2787, the Small Entity Regulatory Relief Opportunity Act. I am very concerned about this bill. The way that it is drafted would open up a huge regulatory hole at the FCC, and would enable companies with over a billion dollars in revenue to be exempted from a wide range of rules intended to protect consumers and, to be honest, small businesses as well. I'm very skeptical about the merits and need for this legislation.

With that I want to yield the balance of my time.

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