

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement  
of**

**Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Mike Doyle**

***“Realizing the Benefits of Rural Broadband: Challenges and Solutions”***

**July 17, 2018**

Before I get started, I want to express my deepest condolences to Robin Colwell, the majority’s chief counsel, on the passing of her husband Bill. I know Robin and her family are grieving their loss. My thoughts and prayers are with her and her family.

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

We live in a divided nation when it comes to broadband access. All too often people living in urban areas are the digital have’s, where as those living in rural areas are being left behind with few or no choices, higher prices, and lower speeds.

As I and many of colleagues have said in the past, if we are going to bring more broadband to rural America, our government needs to make a sustained investment in building out more infrastructure.

That’s why I am proud to support Ranking Member Pallone’s Lift America Act which would dedicate forty billion dollars to building out broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved parts of the country.

We also need to give communities, like Pinetops, the freedom and flexibility to provision their own service. That’s why I’m proud to continue to support Ms. Eshoo’s Community Broadband Act. Ms. Corker Craig, reading your testimony reiterates exactly why this is such an important option for rural communities.

I’m also proud to have introduced the Airwaves Act with Mr. Lance. The bill directs the FCC to conduct a number of spectrum auctions as well as make significant amounts of new unlicensed spectrum available. The bill would set aside a portion of the revenue from these auctions for the deployment of new wireless broadband infrastructure in served and underserved parts of rural America.

Mr. Aiken discusses, in his testimony, a number of the bands in the bill which would be ideal for buildout of broadband in rural areas. Specifically, the Citizen’s Broadband Radio Service or CBRS and the lower C-Band.

It is important to keep in mind is that these bands **could** be structured in a way that would enhance rural broadband deployment, but they don't have to be. The commission is currently considering changes to both these bands.

The CBRS band was envisioned as a model for an innovative new spectrum licensing system that would cover smaller areas than traditional cellular licenses.

This licensing model was supported by a broad range of industries, including rural broadband providers, who see tremendous potential in being able to access smaller more affordable blocks of licensed spectrum. But the Commission is considering changes to this band that would drastically increase license sizes -- crowding out smaller players so that only the largest wireless providers could bid on these licenses.

The Commission also opened a proceeding in the lower C-band. Several satellite companies that operate in this band have proposed making a portion of the band available for mobile broadband, which is great. But I agree with Mr. Aiken that this band has a lot more potential. The rest of the band could be shared between satellite operators and broadband providers using fixed wireless service. This proposal has the potential to greatly expand broadband deployment in rural parts of the country.

In both of these bands the Commission has before it two roads. They can work to make as much spectrum available for mobile broadband services. At the last hearing we had on that topic, every witness acknowledged 5G would not solve the rural-urban broadband divide. Or the FCC can adopt spectrum policies that bring broadband to all Americans.

I think it's important for members on this subcommittee to realize that these are decisions that the Commission is making right now that could affect the future of broadband in rural communities.

I yield the remainder of my time to Mr. Butterfield.

I'd like unanimous consent to include letters from CCA and NCTA in the record.