

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications & Technology Ranking Member Doris Matsui

Hearing on “Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission.”

June 21, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Latta. On March 9th of this year, the Commission’s auction authority expired.

The very next day, this Subcommittee held a hearing. Ironically, the title of that hearing was “Defending America’s Wireless Leadership.”

As I said at that hearing, allowing this authority to lapse “was a failure. To add insult to injury, it was a completely avoidable failure.”

I think I can speak for the Members of this Subcommittee when I say allowing this rolling lapse to continue is unacceptable.

The stakes are simply too high.

In May, the Energy and Commerce Committee once again passed a bill to reestablish FCC auction authority, reassert the statutory role of civilian agencies, and fund vital national security initiatives. Until we pass that bill, economic and national security imperatives will remain in limbo.

One of the most pressing, is our unfinished work ripping and replacing vulnerable Chinese gear in our networks.

I say that because without additional funding the FCC will be forced to prorate reimbursements on July 17th.

As an original cosponsor of the Secure and Trusted Networks Act, I can say with confidence – Congress didn’t mandate the removal of *some* of this gear, we mandated the removal of every last piece.

We did that because it’s a clear and immediate national security threat.

Passing the Spectrum Auction Reauthorization Act would also remove any uncertainty about the FCC’s ability to grant 2.5 GHz licenses that are sitting unused.

Companies with service footprints across the country are eager to put this spectrum to use.

T-Mobile alone is waiting for the FCC to approve more than 7,000 licenses with a collective value of more than 300 million dollars.

For these reasons and more, I'm hopeful the House will vote on the bipartisan Spectrum Auction Reauthorization Act as soon as possible.

It'll then be up to the Senate to join us in this effort, and I sincerely hope they do.

But there's much more we need to discuss today because the FCC's authority is vast and there's a lot of important work ahead of us.

Most importantly, we need to stay committed to keeping American families connected.

The bipartisan infrastructure law established the Affordable Connectivity Program or ACP to help families afford a broadband connection.

Whether that's for the first time, or when you need a little extra help making ends meet, the ACP program is working.

This program now helps more than 18 million households pay for internet service. And, like the law that created it, it remains steadfastly bipartisan.

Republican Governors across the country are witnessing this program in action and praising its effectiveness.

Governor Ivey of Alabama called the ACP "a great resource for Alabamians to get help paying for the internet."

Governor Lombardo of Nevada said "we need to make sure all Nevadans have a chance to connect, which is why we are committed to helping families access high-speed internet through the ACP."

And just yesterday, Senator Wicker led a group of eight Republican Senators urging the White House to "ensure the continuity of funding for this program."

I ask unanimous consent that this letter be entered into the record.

This bipartisan support reflects ACP's successes – it keeps families connected, provides new customers for broadband companies, and grows the economy.

That's why I'm committed to keeping the ACP funded.

With that, I want to thank Chairwoman Rosenworcel and the Commissioners for being here today and look forward to our discussion.

I yield the balance of my time.