

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Chairman Mike Doyle

Hearing on “5G and Beyond: Exploring the Next Wireless Frontier”

March 16, 2022

Welcome and thank you all for being here today. A special welcome to our witnesses, and I thank them for their contributions to this discussion. I’m very glad to be holding this hearing on such an important issue.

As the subcommittee with jurisdiction over spectrum, and federal and commercial spectrum management, I’m heartened the Communications and Technology Subcommittee has shown such bipartisan leadership and interest on this issue. Spectrum policy is not an issue on the top of average consumers’ minds, but plays a significant role in their everyday lives.

The average U.S. household has 25 connected devices, smartphone penetration is above 80 percent, and wireless device subscriptions outnumber the U.S. population. We use baby monitors and garage door openers; listen to the radio and watch TV using our mobile devices; and our factories, farms, and transportation systems are ever more connected, very often wirelessly. All of these uses are dependent on spectrum – and the American economy is dependent on spectrum.

And as we push towards 100 percent broadband connectivity at home, spectrum will be necessary for customers regardless of whether they have a wired or fixed wireless connection. It is our job, as members of this subcommittee, to make sure spectrum policy continues to enable these uses and opens new opportunities for the next-generation technologies and innovations.

Fundamentally, we need to use our nation’s airwaves as efficiently as possible. With an eye on the exponential growth of wireless data usage, we know more spectrum will need to be made available for consumer use. This means the federal government, which still holds a majority of this country’s spectrum, needs to use its spectrum allocations more efficiently, recognize spectrum sharing as a viable opportunity, and work cooperatively with neighboring commercial spectrum users.

For Congress, we should recognize the spectrum demands of the federal government and give agencies the tools they need in this process. With our commercial spectrum, we must achieve a balance of both licensed and unlicensed spectrum. It is important to make spectrum available to sustain the deployment of 5G and pave the way for 6G.

At the same time, we need to identify spectrum for unlicensed use to sustain the explosive traffic we have seen in Wi-Fi, and fuel the next generation of Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi 7. I believe the lower 3 gigahertz band presents an enormous opportunity for making additional consumer-

oriented spectrum available. The Spectrum Innovation Act strikes the right balance between federal incumbent users' needs, and the importance of their missions and maximizing spectrum for consumer use.

With additional spectrum reallocated to the private sector, new opportunities will arise for additional uses in both licensed and unlicensed spectrum bands. I'd like to take this moment to thank Ranking Member Latta and his staff for the work they have been doing with my team to find a bipartisan path forward for this bill. I'm looking forward to moving it with their support.

Another item that needs swift action by Congress is the extension of the FCC's ability to conduct spectrum auctions. It would be a mistake for Congress to let this authority lapse. In addition to how spectrum is used, we also must look at how these spectrum allocation decisions are made. And it is imperative that we reevaluate our country's spectrum management policies.

Congress is taking steps, such as with the Spectrum Coordination Act, and NTIA and the FCC are acting as well, as their announcement on increased cooperation demonstrates. With Ranking Member Latta, I recently laid out some principles that should help guide us:

NTIA must continue to be recognized throughout the federal government as the entity tasked with balancing the needs and concerns of the federal government; Clear rules and expectations for all spectrum users will lead to better outcomes; Those rules and processes should be based on science and engineering; And lastly, that the federal government needs to speak with a clear, unified voice when making spectrum decisions.

Recommitting ourselves to these principles will lead to better management policies, and ultimately better outcomes for both the federal and non-federal users of spectrum. While these are weedy topics, how we approach them will affect our constituents greatly and how our economy can function and grow.

So, I look forward to hearing the witnesses' expert testimony and the thoughts and concerns of my colleagues.

Thank you again to our panelists and I will now yield to Ranking Member Latta.