

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

Hearing on “Oversight of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration”

December 5, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Latta. Since Administrator Davidson last appeared before this Subcommittee, there have been several developments that elevate the already crucial role of the NTIA. From BEAD deployment and spectrum governance to AI and cybersecurity, NTIA has an opportunity to make a lasting down payment on American innovation.

As we move forward, it’s important to contextualize NTIA’s role in these important policy discussions. Specifically, that NTIA is responsible by law for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues.

Acknowledging this role has never been more important. Today, technological developments can no longer be neatly sorted. They have cross-cutting impacts that affect multiple industries simultaneously. And, by extension, they create equities for multiple federal agencies. In this increasingly interconnected world, it’s imperative that the federal government speak with one voice. NTIA is the right agency to deliver that message.

Thankfully, this Subcommittee has been active in providing the agency with new tools while continuing our vital oversight role. Back in July, this Subcommittee marked up the NTIA Reauthorization Act. Congress has not reauthorized the NTIA since 1992 and I believe the bill Chairman Latta and I have drafted, is needed. With the bipartisan NTIA Reauthorization Act, we provide new tools and authority to ensure the agency can fulfill its mission. That means elevating the NTIA Administrator from Assistant to Under Secretary and modernizing the Agency’s mission to reflect the challenges of today and opportunities of tomorrow.

I’m also glad it includes my Spectrum Coexistence Act. This language will require NTIA to conduct a review of federal receiver technology to support more intensive use of spectrum. The FCC is exploring receiver performance for commercial equipment, and it’s important we do the same for federal tech. The bill also includes the SMART Act Congressman Guthrie and I introduced to develop an Incumbent Informing Capability. This would allow federal users to share spectrum with commercial users by telling them when and where they’re operating in real time. But the bill also encourages the development of A.I. for spectrum management, increases NITA’s role in cybersecurity, and supports public safety communications. I’ll continue to work with Chairman Latta to see that it receives a vote on the floor as soon as possible.

I’m also looking forward to discussing the National Spectrum Strategy and Presidential memorandum on spectrum with Administrator Davidson. The national strategy represents months of interagency consultation and is a crucial step toward a robust spectrum pipeline. While the previous administration failed to develop a national strategy, I’m eager to work with

NTIA to make up for lost time. The processes outlined in the strategy and memorandum will accomplish two foundational goals: ensure federal agencies have the tools they need for their missions while providing the commercial spectrum we need to continue innovating. Taken together, these documents outline a clear roadmap for reasserting U.S. leadership in telecommunications.

NTIA is also in the process of implementing the funding I helped secure in the CHIPS and Science Act to support the development of the Open RAN market. NTIA has released funding to advance testing and evaluation of open and interoperable networks which I think is fundamental to catalyzing additional private sector investments. And, of course, we need to take this opportunity to hear more about the status of BEAD implementation. This bipartisan program represents the single most valuable tool we have to close the digital divide and all of our constituents will benefit from its success.

I want to thank Administrator Davidson again for appearing before us and yield back the balance of my time.