

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Doris Matsui

***Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Hearing on “Examining Solutions to
Expedite Broadband Permitting”***

September 18, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Hudson.

Before we begin today’s hearing, I want to start with something that should unite us—every American deserves the right to speak freely and safely. Freedom of speech is a cornerstone of our democracy, and political violence has no place here. That’s why I condemn the assassination of Charlie Kirk. We must all stand against violence and stand up for free speech. Defending free speech also means standing against government censorship.

Yesterday, ABC pulled Jimmy Kimmel off the air after threats from President Trump’s FCC chair. That’s censorship—plain and simple. A direct attack on the First Amendment. President Trump has twisted the FCC from an independent agency into a political lapdog to silence his critics. And Republicans are letting it happen. If they truly care about free speech, they’ll pass my Broadcast Freedom and Independence Act, which shields the media from political retaliation—no matter their views.

And this Committee must do its job—hold a full oversight hearing on the FCC to demand accountability for its abuse of power. While this Administration tears down our freedoms, it’s also blocking real solutions Americans need—like connecting the tens of millions trapped on the wrong side of the digital divide.

In my district, thousands are being left behind as our world goes digital. They’re struggling to pay bills, see a doctor, and work or attend class from home. At Leataata Floyd Elementary in Sacramento, where over 95 percent of students come from low-income households, parents face impossible choices between food and broadband. When they can’t afford the internet, their children pay the price in the classroom. They’re counting on us to deliver on broadband—quickly and responsibly.

This hearing could have been our chance for real bipartisan permitting reform—modernizing outdated systems and giving local governments the resources they need. Instead, Republicans are recycling the same broken playbook—offering the same one-sided, cookie-cutter solutions we heard last Congress. Let’s be clear: Republicans are checking boxes, not connecting communities.

Here’s the real problem Republicans won’t address: Permitting offices are often understaffed and under-resourced.

Mandating arbitrary deadlines and rubber-stamp approvals doesn't fix that. It bulldozes local expertise and safeguards. Instead, we need federal, state, and local collaboration. Local leaders are on the front lines. Mayors in my district are ready to move heaven and earth to connect their communities. Our job isn't to tie their hands—it's to help them succeed. That doesn't mean the status quo is perfect. We can and should improve permitting predictability and effectiveness. Especially at the federal level.

That's why I'm co-leading the DIGITAL Applications Act with Congresswoman Cammack. It creates a one-stop online portal to process and track broadband permitting on federal land. That's real streamlining—practical, efficient, respectful of safeguards and local needs. We've succeeded before with bipartisan “dig once” policies and consensus-based FCC reforms. We should build on that, not tear it down.

And let's not forget the bigger crisis—permitting reform means nothing if President Trump guts broadband funding. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law made a historic \$65 billion investment in broadband—through BEAD and digital equity programs so more people can benefit from internet access.

In my district, community organizations were ready to use this funding to help people like Mohammad. A community college student who needed affordable, reliable internet to take classes and build his career. He joined Computer4Kids, a digital navigators program offering tools to engage digitally in the greater Sacramento region. Broadband affordability and digital equity make stories like his possible.

But President Trump is freezing broadband funding, undoing states' work, and slashing affordability protections. His changes will cost consumers MORE while delivering LESS. At the end of the day, BEAD and Digital Equity programs are our best shot at closing the digital divide. Without them, permitting reform is just a band-aid on a gaping wound. We can't let this Administration sabotage the very programs that communities are counting on.

I thank our witnesses for being here, and I look forward to the discussion. With that, I yield back.