

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

Hearing on “SAT Streamlining Act: Modernizing Satellite Licensing for the Final Frontier”

April 21, 2026

I'm glad we're holding this hearing on the SAT Streamlining Act. This is an important conversation because satellites are no longer some niche part of our telecommunications ecosystem. They are becoming a significant way Americans connect and how businesses operate.

As innovation in the satellite marketplace continues to accelerate, our policies need to keep pace. That's especially true when it comes to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) licensing process, which reviews applications to operate satellite systems.

If we want the United States to remain a global leader in communications technology, we need a process that is modern, predictable, and efficient. We can't let outdated processes delay technologies that can help people in their daily lives. Because the reality is, the satellite landscape looks very different today than it did just a few years ago.

In the beginning of 2020, the U.S. had around one thousand satellites in orbit. By 2023, when we passed an earlier version of this bill out of committee, the U.S. had around forty-five hundred satellites. Today, we have over eleven thousand satellites. The sheer scale of this growth is staggering and shows why we need to help our agencies modernize to address this demand. To bring this back down to Earth.

In the Sacramento region, UC Davis is experimenting with innovative satellite projects. They were able to launch their first satellite last year and they did it all, from design to launch, in an unprecedented thirteen months, when most satellite timelines are measured in the span of years. For ambitious feats like UC Davis' to become commonplace, we need a timely and predictable federal process that allows more projects to move on this quickly.

That's why bills like this matter. At its core, the SAT Streamlining Act is about making sure the federal process keeps pace with today's reality. It's about improving efficiency, reducing unnecessary delay, and giving innovators a clearer path to move from idea to deployment. That kind of streamlining can make a real difference. Because now when we talk about satellite policy, we're talking about whether families can get online. We're talking about whether businesses in hard to reach areas can compete and whether patients can access telehealth.

For many communities, especially rural ones, connectivity still isn't guaranteed. But modernization must be about more than speed for speed's sake. My goal is a licensing process that is more efficient and predictable, while still preserving the FCC's ability to ask tough

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questions, rely on expert judgment, and give additional scrutiny when a proposal truly warrants it.

We must also ensure that states can continue enforcing important affordability and consumer protections for satellite broadband services. If we get this right, we can support innovation, strengthen connectivity, and make sure the process is delivering real results for the American people.

That's the balance we should be aiming for. And I'm encouraged that this continues to be an area of bipartisan interest. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how we can improve the process and make sure our licensing framework is delivering for the communities that need it most.

And with that, I yield back.