

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on "Legislative Hearing on Protecting Communications Networks and Improving Connectivity"

July 22, 2026

Today, we are examining legislation across a number of important areas within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction.

Network security continues to be a top priority for me and this Subcommittee. We must stay on top of new and emerging threats that use increasingly sophisticated capabilities to compromise critical infrastructure.

We have watched closely as advancements in the tech space like AI-powered coding and other recent innovations have significantly reduced the time and labor costs for network engineering and coding tasks. The positive applications would be difficult to quantify, but it is clear that widely available AI tools are empowering individuals to build out applications, systems, and even entire businesses virtually overnight, without the need for huge upfront capital investment. Fewer barriers to entry for startups and small businesses should open the door to more competition and choice for consumers.

But using history as a guide, we know that each innovation or new capability that helps the "good guys" is also a tool that can be used by bad actors for nefarious purposes. Whether it is cyber criminals working alone or teams of military or civilian personnel supported by adversarial nations, our enemies can use the same capabilities to more efficiently breach and sabotage American networks. We must ensure our network defenses stay ahead of the curve.

With that in mind, I look forward to today's discussion of the AI for Secure Networks Act, led by Representatives Menendez and Pfluger, and to hearing more about the ways we can proactively employ AI to better defend our communications networks from bad actors.

I am also interested to hear from witnesses about how GUARD Act, led by Representatives McClellan and Moolenaar, can apply the framework of my Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act to the rapidly growing market for humanoid and other robotics. Now is the time to act to prevent untrusted suppliers with ties to our adversaries from flooding the U.S. market with robotics and other advanced technology and services.

There is also plenty of work to be done to address the incessant robocalls and phone scams that still plague consumers on a daily basis despite all of our work on this issue in the past. At best, robocalls and scams are a nuisance. At worst, if executed successfully, they can upend people's lives and cost thousands of dollars that are seldom recovered from bad actors who seek out and prey on seniors, especially.

In spite of bipartisan efforts by Congress, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Federal Trade Commission to work with carriers to weed out scam calls, my constituents continue to raise this issue as one in need of our continued attention. I hope today's discussion can shed light on what obstacles are still preventing regulators and law enforcement from stopping or reducing robocalls, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how legislation like the QUIET Act and the Foreign Robocall Elimination Act can help those efforts.

We will also consider two pieces of legislation that aim to build on the Subcommittee's work to deploy broadband infrastructure across the country so that every American can access affordable and reliable high-speed internet service. In particular, I hope to hear our witnesses' perspectives on how the PLAN for Broadband Act, led by Representatives Peters and Walberg, and the Data BRIDGE Act, led by Representatives Kelly, Soto, and Houchin, can improve how we manage, track, and carry out federal broadband deployment initiatives as efficiently as possible.

I look forward to the discussion and yield back the balance of my time.