



Opening Statement

by

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“The Telecommunications Act of 1996: 30 Years Later”

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Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Matsui, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to celebrate and reflect on the 30th anniversary of the Telecommunications Act.

This milestone is especially meaningful to me personally. I had the privilege of working on the Act as a staffer for Senator Lott, overseeing the implementation of it as a Member of Congress, and today I see its lasting impact from the private sector as CEO of INCOMPAS, representing the companies building the networks that power our digital economy.

INCOMPAS represents competitors building networks of the future, innovators creating and delivering Internet content, and AI infrastructure companies that ensure we have the energy and infrastructure needed to win the global AI race.

Our members are catalysts for economic growth and improving the quality of life for all Americans through technological innovation, new services, and greater choice for consumers and businesses. The services they offer today were made possible by the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

Few pieces of legislation have had as profound and enduring impact on our economy and society. At its core, the Act was grounded in a simple, but powerful, principle: Competition drives innovation. Congress made a deliberate choice to break down monopolies, open markets, and allow new entrants to compete. That decision helped unleash unprecedented private investment, expand consumer choice, and create the foundation for the modern internet.

The light-touch, pro-innovation approach is a key reason the United States became a global leader in internet development. The Act helped create the policy framework that allowed the internet to grow as an open, dynamic platform. By encouraging competition and removing unnecessary regulatory barriers, Congress set the stage for innovation at the edge, where entrepreneurs, startups, and new ideas could flourish.

The Act also reflected a broader national commitment to universal connectivity. Universal service is not just a policy; it is a promise that every American, regardless of where they live, can access our networks and participate in the digital economy. It is why the transition to next-generation networks must be done responsibly and with access to critical infrastructure in mind. That promise remains just as important today as it was 30 years ago.

Today, we are entering a new era defined by artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and next-generation networks. The infrastructure that INCOMPAS members are building – fiber, data centers, energy transmission and generation, and global connectivity platforms – is a direct result of the policy decisions made in the ‘96 Act.

And just as before, success will depend on getting the fundamentals right:

- Promoting competition, not concentration that limits entry
- Removing barriers to deployment, not adding new ones
- Encouraging investment through predictable policy
- And ensuring that connectivity remains open, accessible, and secure

The lesson of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 is clear: when Congress sets the right framework, the private sector delivers. Investment follows, innovation accelerates, and consumers benefit.

The 1996 Act endures not because it anticipated every technology that followed, but because it was anchored to principles that transcend any technology: competition, openness, and universal connectivity.

We are now writing the first sentences of the next chapter, and I would ask that you write them with the same clarity of purpose. That means streamlining permitting so that data centers, fiber networks, and transmission infrastructure can be deployed without years of regulatory delay. And it means advancing competitive energy policies that ensure the power required to run an AI-enabled economy is affordable and accessible to all market participants.

The architecture of that economy is being laid right now. Just as the 1996 Act unlocked the internet era, this committee has a real opportunity to lay the foundation for America's future in AI and digital infrastructure, and the country is counting on you to get it right.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.