

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “Understanding the Cyber Threat and Implications for the 21st Century
Economy”
March 3, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Last December, in the wake of the Sony breach, I announced that the committee would hold a series of hearings to examine the growing cyber threats to electronic commerce and the American economy. That effort is now underway.

So much of our daily existence depends on the Internet and information technologies that collectively comprise cyberspace. These technologies have brought tremendous convenience, opportunity, and prosperity to the United States and nations across the globe. They inspire innovation, freedom of expression, and international and cultural engagement. They continue to revolutionize the way we communicate, learn, innovate, govern, and interact with the world around us.

At the same time, cyberspace has introduced us to new challenges. For the same reason a business in Michigan can reach customers across the globe, an unknown bad actor can target that business' intellectual property, customer information, or operations. The consequences and costs of such a breach can be significant, yet the costs of launching the attack, and consequences for failure, are minimal. As a result, the incentives strongly favor the bad guys – and they will keep coming, keep evolving – while the good guys struggle to keep pace.

As more of our lives are entrusted to cyberspace, the threats will continue to grow. Already, barely a day goes by where we do not learn of a new breach or potential vulnerability. With everything from health records to toasters increasingly integrated into cyberspace, the challenge can appear daunting.

We will hear today that there is no easy solution to the cyber threat. It exists for the same fundamental reasons that the Internet, information technology, and cyberspace provide benefit to society – that is, that the Internet remains an open system accessible to anyone who wants access. This may sound frightening or overwhelming, but I suggest it presents an opportunity. Today we have an opportunity to reframe our understanding of this challenge, to develop a level of context and perspective that so often gets lost in debates over specific incidents, policy issues, or legislation.

I encourage my colleagues to embrace this opportunity. Let's learn from this discussion so we can approach cybersecurity with fresh perspective and a common understanding of the challenges it presents.

Cyberspace has been, and will continue to be, an engine of economic, social, and cultural opportunity. We need to understand the nature and scope of the threat to the security of information in cyberspace, and develop an understanding of how to address these threats without jeopardizing the fundamental benefits that cyberspace provides.

This hearing is just the beginning as our work continues.

###