

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Markup of H.R. 2666, H.R. 1301, and H.R._____,
“Small Business Broadband Deployment Act
February 10, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today we are considering three bills intended to benefit consumers, improve access to communications, and protect small businesses from burdensome regulations. Last month, we held a legislative hearing on these bills, where we heard from witnesses who provided us with valuable feedback and suggestions for improving our legislation. In the time since that hearing, we've continued to work with our colleagues to focus on changes to the bills that achieve our goals and hopefully garner bipartisan support.

The first bill we'll take up today is H.R. 1301, the Amateur Radio Parity Act of 2015. This bill puts into place common sense reforms that ensure that ham radio operators have the opportunity to place unobtrusive equipment on their home property. As a ham operator myself, I know firsthand both the passion that operators have for this service, as well as how valuable they are, especially in times of emergency. While we are seeking to protect ham operators' ability to put up antennas, we also recognize that there is a role for community associations in preserving the interests of their residents. To that end, we've been working closely with stakeholders and our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to come to an agreement on language that achieves both of these goals. While the bill we will vote on today is the original language, we are still negotiating and we intend to find a compromise before we move the bill to full committee markup.

Next, we'll consider H.R. 2666, a bill that prohibits the FCC from regulating the rates of broadband Internet access service. At our hearing last month, there was broad agreement on both sides of the aisle that we could in fact come to consensus on a bill that would prohibit the FCC from engaging in harmful rate regulation. We are seeking to memorialize in law the intent expressed by Chairman Wheeler and President Obama when the Open Internet Rules were adopted – to allow for bright-line protections without regulating the rates charged by broadband providers. We have taken to heart the concerns expressed by witnesses and members alike at our hearing, and are working to incorporate those into legislative language. I am confident that we can find a middle ground that protects consumers while ensuring that no future FCC abuses the new authority granted in the net neutrality proceeding.

Finally, we will consider a bill designed to alleviate reporting burdens for small businesses. The bill would make permanent the exemption to the FCC's enhanced disclosure requirements in the Open Internet order. As with the other bills, while there are disagreements on the details, there is an appropriate balance that can be struck and we are very close to reaching that balance with our Democratic colleagues. We are working together to iron out the small differences that remain, but both sides are working in good faith to protect our small businesses and entrepreneurial ISPs from the heavy hand of the FCC's enhanced transparency requirements. When we meet again for full committee markup, I am confident that we will move forward with a bill on which we all agree.

I'm optimistic that we can put the finishing touches on these bills in the weeks ahead and once again produce important, bipartisan legislation that protects consumers, small businesses, and access to the latest communications services.

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