



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 14, 2016

CONTACT

Matt Schumacher — (202) 225-5735

Pallone Opening Statement at FCC Privacy Rules Hearing

Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing entitled “FCC Overreach: Examining the Proposed Privacy Rules”:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Eshoo. And thank you to our three witnesses for being here today.

Today, we’re just learning that the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld the FCC’s Open Internet Rules. I have always been a strong supporter of net neutrality and the FCC’s net neutrality rules. While I have not had time to review the court’s decision yet, it seems this was a big win for consumers. This decision puts the FCC’s privacy proposals on firm legal ground.

For more than a decade, an overwhelming majority of Americans have agreed that privacy is fundamentally important on the internet. According to a recent study by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 84 percent of Americans are worried about their privacy and security online. Half of the households surveyed are so worried about their privacy that they limit their economic and civic activities when they go online. Another survey, this one from the Pew Research Center earlier this year, found that nearly three quarters of internet users say it’s very important to them that they have control over who has access to their information.

It’s important that we take these opinions and concerns into account as we move forward with this hearing today.

It’s also important that we listen to the American people about the best ways to ensure that they have more control over their information.

The FCC has clearly been listening and proposed new privacy rules for broadband providers. While many questions about the FCC’s proposals are still unanswered, I support the agency’s desire to do more to protect consumers.

Unfortunately, critics of the FCC came out quickly in opposition to the proposal before they even knew the details. They say that the FCC's proposed privacy rules are fatally flawed because they only reach broadband providers—not websites or social media.

I agree that protecting consumers across the internet ecosystem is important as well. But I cannot agree with those that claim that consumers should not get privacy protections anywhere because they cannot get them everywhere. In the face of uncertainty created by a company's privacy policies, nearly 70 percent of internet users would prefer the government do more to protect their personal information. Consumers want more protection—not less.

And this is where Congress has work to do. In order to address the legitimate concerns consumers have about their privacy online, we should give the Federal Trade Commission authority to adopt its own rules over websites. That would allow the FTC to craft privacy rules for websites as well.

This sounds like a common sense approach but just last week, the Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee marked up a bill that would make the problem worse. The bill I'm talking about would effectively gut the FTC.

It's kind of ironic that my colleagues would praise the FTC and its expertise in their privacy letter to Chairman Wheeler while at the same time advancing bills through the Committee that seek to cut the FTC's legs out from under it. Giving the FTC authority to adopt new rules would help ensure our privacy is safe, no matter where we go on the internet or how we connect. When consumers are safe, we are all better off.

I look forward to today's discussion.

###

democrats-energycommerce.house.gov | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#)