

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Rural Call Quality and Reliability”
September 8, 2016**

(As prepared for delivery)

I'm pleased to be here today to discuss a topic that is important to folks back in Southwest Michigan, and all over rural America: call quality and reliability. It has never been easier to pick up the phone and dial a number to be in touch with friends and loved ones, no matter where they are in the country. But for those living in rural areas, this connection isn't always guaranteed and folks back home are rightly frustrated.

Many of us have probably experienced the very issue at hand today. You make a call to someone and it rings over and over again, but no one, not even the voicemail, picks up. Or maybe you place a call only to hear a pre-recorded message telling you that the number you dialed is not in service, leaving you to wonder if you dialed the wrong number or if the person you were calling has been disconnected from their service. And even in cases where you are able to connect, the sound might be distorted or delayed. Unfortunately, for many of my constituents and people living in rural areas across the country, this is a common occurrence.

Unreliable service is much more than just an inconvenience for consumers, it's a threat to public safety and harmful to the rural economy. People rely on these networks to receive messages from their kids' schools and rural businesses depend on the networks to receive calls from all over the country. Rural consumers expect to receive dependable service, but the truth is that they are disproportionately plagued with failed calls and poor call quality. Whether it's a local business trying to run their day to day operations, or one family member trying to reach another, the result should be the same: clear and reliable voice service.

I know that the FCC has made attempts to help resolve this issue and I commend them for their efforts. We are here today to continue the discussion and explore additional ways to resolve this problem once and for all. Poor call quality and reliability in rural areas is a real problem; but fortunately, there appear to be real solutions. It's time we set higher standards for the integrity of our networks, but more importantly, for the benefit of our constituents. Folks deserve to have the peace of mind that when they pick up the phone, their call will go through.

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