

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

House Energy and Commerce Committee

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

**Markup of H.R. 2669, Anti Spoofing Act of 2015 and H.R. 2566,
Improving Rural Call Quality and Reliability Act of 2015.**

September 12-13, 2016

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Eshoo for holding this markup today on two important communications bills.

This subcommittee often focuses on some of the most cutting-edge issues in communications and technology, but today, we are going back to basics. One of the bills we're marking up would ensure calls connect—no matter where someone is calling in the country.

Many people would be surprised to hear that this is still even a problem. After all, we are not talking about new technology here. But, unfortunately, in

hard-to-reach areas in rural America, even simple voice calls on a landline phone often do not connect. That is simply not acceptable.

And the issue is not just rural call completion—it is any call completion. Constituents in my district in New Jersey—which is not rural—may not be able to connect to friends and family in rural areas of the nation. When any of us pick up the phone to call someone in a rural area we expect that those call will go through. After all, these calls could be emergencies when every second counts. Companies should not simply refuse to connect them because they consider it inconvenient.

We are also marking up Congresswoman Grace Meng’s Anti-Spoofing Act. This bill aims to stop scammers from using misleading caller IDs. We have heard from consumers who get fooled by fraudsters who steal their personal information by impersonating a loved one or trusted institution on the telephone. We have already made it illegal to use a fake caller ID for voice calls. This bill would take the next step and extend that commonsense prohibition to text messages.

The bill would ensure that scammers aren't able to send out fraudulent text messages to prey on unsuspecting consumers. We always need to put consumers first, and this bill does that. I'd like to thank Congresswoman Meng for her leadership on this issue.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to thank Chairman Walden for his commitment to regular order. I know that we have a tight calendar this month, so I appreciate his willingness to ensure our committee has a chance to fully understand the bills we are considering today.

These bills are important and should be moved through the process. But I also think it's important for this subcommittee to take a close look at unwanted robocalls. Two weeks ago, Ranking Members Eshoo, and Schakowsky, joined me in asking that the Committee start considering how to update the law to stop these unwanted calls. Fortunately, our Republican colleagues responded swiftly and positively to our request, and we look

forward to working with them to end these unwanted calls. This is good news for consumers, because together I am confident we can make a difference.