

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Marsha Blackburn
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Fueling The 21st Century Wireless Economy”
April 5, 2017**

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome to the Subcommittee’s hearing titled: “*Fueling The 21st Century Wireless Economy*”. Thank you to the witnesses for appearing to offer your expertise.

It is often said that spectrum is the lifeblood of wireless connectivity and wireless demand continues to surge at an incredible rate. As a result, it is imperative that the Subcommittee continue working to unleash spectrum for commercial purposes. The Subcommittee held multiple hearings on this issue during the 114th Congress and noted that “*wireless subscribers data use will grow 400 percent by 2019.*” The Subcommittee must demand that the FCC and NTIA work quickly to identify bands which can be reallocated and cleared for commercial use as we push to develop 5G networks.

A two sided solution is necessary to address the spectrum crunch. First, we should push for continued deployment of spectrum. Second, the development of technologies which enhance spectral efficiency is vital. The NTIA will play an important role in this endeavor as it sets new clearing targets and evaluates how efficiently government agencies use their spectrum. Federal entities should not be permitted to squat on this valuable resource without providing sufficient information detailing how they use it. The societal and financial value of spectrum is simply too great for it to not be maximized.

The FCC’s National Broadband Plan of 2010 identified 547 MHz of spectrum suitable for mobile broadband to be unleashed over a ten year period and we recently completed two successful spectrum auctions. The AWS-3 auction generated 44 billion dollars in revenue and cleared 65 MHz of spectrum, while the Broadcast Incentive auction raised \$19.8 billion dollars and cleared 70 MHz of spectrum for exclusive licensed use. These auctions were successful; however, it is important that as a general rule we not impose restrictions on who can bid on spectrum. Congressman Latta and myself wrote to the FCC in June 2015 about this issue and expressed concern that “*restricting free and open access to spectrum*

creates barriers to capital investment, innovation, deployment and puts the government in the position of picking winners and losers.” The free market is the most effective vehicle for continued spectrum deployment. Well intentioned auction rules can artificially depreciate the value of spectrum.

We should advance bi-partisan legislation, such as the Guthrie/Matsui Federal Spectrum Incentive Act, which provides incentives for the reallocation of government held spectrum for commercial purposes. Also, Congressman Kinzinger’s H.R. 1814 encourages spectrum licensees to make unused or underused spectrum available for use by rural and smaller carriers in order to expand wireless coverage and is certainly worthy of further examination as we look to increase rural broadband deployment. The subcommittee will also discuss the Senate’s MOBILE NOW legislation, which addresses deployment challenges related to both spectrum and infrastructure.

The 5G revolution is upon us and America must not fall behind. Deploying and promoting efficient use of spectrum is the two sided solution we must adopt as wireless communications networks expand and the Internet of Things seemingly grows into the Internet of Everything. Republicans and Democrats are eager to tackle the spectrum crunch. We look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.

Thank you.