

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Marsha Blackburn
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “The Broadcast Incentive Auction: Update on
Repacking Opportunities and Challenges”
September 7, 2017**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The Subcommittee on Communications and Technology will now come to order. The Chair now recognizes herself for five minutes for an opening statement.

Welcome everyone to the Communications and Technology Subcommittee’s hearing titled: “*The Broadcast Incentive Auction: Update on Repacking Opportunities and Challenges.*” Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today to offer your perspective on this important issue.

Mobile connectivity has become an essential component of our everyday lives. Today, Americans are consuming more mobile content than ever before. Since 2010, data traffic delivered over wireless networks has increased by a factor of 35. Last year alone, Americans generated over 13 trillion megabytes of wireless data traffic. That is the equivalent of 1.5 million years of streaming HD video. All of this consumption has led to a pressing need for more mobile broadband spectrum.

This committee, along with the FCC, NTIA, and the private sector, has worked to identify opportunities to feed the spectrum pipeline. The broadcast incentive auction presented a rare opportunity to make a significant block of spectrum available for mobile broadband use. After years of discussion on auction design and preparation, the first two phases of the auction have been successfully completed. Earlier this year, the reverse and forward auctions concluded, raising \$19.8 billion in revenues – the second largest auction in FCC history – and contributing over \$7 billion to federal deficit reduction.

We have now begun the third phase of the auction – the repack. In crafting legislation that authorized the auction, this committee worked very hard to strike a balance between the needs of broadcasters and the consumer demand for wireless service. Discussions involving stakeholders from all sides of the auction resulted in agreement on the post-auction transition timeline and budget. The FCC has done its part to carry out the first part of the auction and set parameters for the repack. It is now time for industry to work together to ensure that this agreement is honored and that the repack is completed on time.

This morning we will hear about the ongoing challenges with completing this phase of the auction. Our witnesses will discuss outstanding issues with relocating broadcasters to new channels as well as the importance of clearing the 600 megahertz band as soon as possible. We will also examine unanswered questions surrounding low power television and translator stations – an issue very important to many members of this committee.

Hurricane Harvey has reminded us all how important broadcasters and wireless providers are in times of emergency. Preserving access to over-the-air television while also meeting consumer demand for mobile broadband is a goal we all share. Today's panel will inform us on challenges and opportunities in the latest effort to advance this goal.

Thank you and I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.