



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 25, 2017

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Pallone Opening Remarks at FCC Oversight Hearing

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Communications and Technology hearing titled, “Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission.”*

Thank you, Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Doyle for holding this hearing today. I appreciate that you are maintaining this subcommittee’s tradition of oversight of the FCC — I know some people here today would prefer you wouldn’t.

Congressional oversight is especially important now because the FCC is on a path to take up a number of controversial issues in the next few months. Nonetheless, it’s curious that this hearing is scheduled for today in particular—just one day before Chairman Pai is expected to make public at least one proposal that enriches a single company above others, and that would clear out any last obstacles to Sinclair Broadcasting’s purchase of Tribune Media Company. This would be the single largest owner of television broadcast stations buying the second largest.

Chairman Pai has claimed repeatedly that it is simply coincidence that his actions are all timed to benefit Sinclair. But if that was the case, why can’t the members of the Committee see his latest proposals that he plans to circulate tomorrow before the Commission came before us? And now Chairman Pai has refused repeatedly to respond to my questions about allegations about his relationship with Sinclair. This kind of evasiveness with Congress does not help put anyone’s concerns to rest.

These moves are just another example of how this FCC values large companies over small ones and always puts companies before consumers. The most glaring example of this, of course, is Chairman Pai’s commitment to eviscerate net neutrality protections by the end of the year.

Net neutrality protects consumers, protects small businesses, and protects free speech. I hope that the FCC is spending this time reviewing the millions of comments that have been filed, including comments from the Democratic members of this Committee. I also hope the

FCC considers the thousands of consumer complaints that have been made public since the comment period closed. These complaints demonstrate that consumers' problems with broadband providers is much farther reaching than the FCC's Proposed Rulemaking let on.

Together, these items have the potential to drastically remake the way Americans communicate. And in taking on these issues, the FCC must find a way to insulate itself from the political pressures from the President. Chairman Pai has claimed that he has restored independence to the FCC. Yet he refuses—repeatedly—to put any distance between himself and President Trump, whether it is net neutrality, Sinclair, or even protecting a free press. That evasiveness does not inspire confidence.

The FCC has a long tradition of bipartisanship, but unfortunately that is simply not the case today. Hardworking American consumers and future Congresses are sure to take a dim view of the current partisan politics at the FCC. It's time to restore that bipartisan tradition.

I thank the Chairman and Commissioners for appearing before us today. And with that, I yield back.

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