

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Hearing on “Oversight of the Federal Communications  
Commission”  
October 25, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'd like to welcome Commissioner Carr for the first time, and welcome back Commissioner Rosenworcel as this Subcommittee continues in its long tradition of active oversight of the FCC.

I couldn't agree more with Chairman Blackburn that this commission has some very important work to do. The United States has weathered a large share of natural disasters this year, including the wildfires that have devastated hundreds of thousands of acres in Oregon and across much of the West. These catastrophic weather events have shown the importance of maintaining the most reliable and modern communications systems, particularly in emergencies.

I look forward to hearing updates on the agency's contributions to the overall federal relief efforts underway in these areas as well as those impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Although some of the affected areas are almost back up to speed, thanks to a lot of hard work on the part of both industry and government, we are facing enormous challenges in restoring essential services in other areas.

We appreciate the commission's efforts to streamline permitting, advance funding, and provide much needed assistance. We also appreciate the commission's work to keep us informed, through a bipartisan, bicameral briefing on FCC hurricane response efforts that we requested and that Chairman Pai's team quickly provided at the beginning of this month.

As 2017 draws to a close, we find ourselves waiting on a number of key items to emerge from the commission. In no way does this committee expect our oversight to delay the commission's important work.

Rather, hearings like this are vital to keeping open the lines of communication and exposing commissioners and committee members alike to different perspectives, yielding better understanding and better decision making. But we expect the

commission's work to go on regardless, just as it did under the previous Administration.

The subcommittee continues its work as well, having just finished a markup of an FCC reauthorization bill for the first time in many years. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for working with us to see this effort through, and continuing that work as we move toward full committee markup.

Last month, we held a hearing on the challenges and opportunities presented by the repacking process the commission has embarked upon.

I commend the commission's continuing efforts to release funding and work with every broadcaster to ensure their needs are being met as this transition evolves in a timely manner. Your input has been, and will continue to be, extremely valuable as this committee explores initiatives to solve for the issues that still remain.

Some of my colleagues may wish to use this opportunity as a forum to rehash once again the arguments for dumping cutting-edge broadband Internet service into the stale, musty bucket that is Title II. In case anyone was wondering, my position on this has not changed.

This commission should not be dissuaded in any way by the previous commission's partisan maneuver, which upended stacks of commission precedent and disregarded reams of legislative history to achieve the result demanded by President Obama.

It is up to the commission to set the optimal regulatory conditions to fuel broadband investment and deployment, and I hope to see a new bar set in this regard before the end of the year.

Ultimately, Congress is the appropriate forum to settle the net neutrality debate. And I have been continuing my efforts to negotiate a compromise. Although my staff continues to engage with the various affected parties in productive discussions toward that end, my colleagues in the minority have been largely uninterested. I would love to see that change.

We are willing and able to codify net neutrality protections and establish a federal framework providing certainty to all participants in the Internet ecosystem, and we don't need Title II to do it.

We have the same end goal: preserving the Internet as a free, open, dynamic environment to unleash innovation and drive our economy, while also doing everything we can to extend its benefits to every American. We should be able to work together and clear this issue off our plates.