



March 2, 2018

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

FROM: Committee Majority Staff

RE: Hearing entitled “Oversight of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.”

I. INTRODUCTION

The Subcommittee on Communications and Technology will hold a hearing on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 10:00 a.m. in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled “Oversight of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.” The Subcommittee will hear from the Department of Commerce’s Assistant Secretary and Administrator of National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), David Redl, about President Trump’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 budget request for NTIA.

II. WITNESS

- The Honorable David Redl, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and Administrator, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

III. BACKGROUND

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is the Executive Branch agency principally responsible for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues.

NTIA states that its programs and policymaking focus largely on expanding broadband internet access and adoption in America, expanding the use of spectrum by all users, and ensuring that the internet remains an engine for continued innovation and economic growth. In addition to working with other Executive Branch agencies to develop Administration positions, NTIA represents the Executive Branch in both domestic and international telecommunications and information policy activities.¹

NTIA accomplishes its mission through its core programs of: (1) Domestic and International Policies; (2) Spectrum Management; (3) Advanced Communications Research; and (4) Broadband Programs.

¹ <https://www.ntia.doc.gov/about>

The total NTIA budget request for FY19 is over \$33.6 million, which is roughly \$1.6 million more than amounts appropriated for FY17.² For NTIA's core programs, the FY19 budget requests \$8.13 million for domestic and international policies, which work to preserve an open, interconnected global internet through domestic interagency coordination as well as working with other governments and international organizations to reach consensus on relevant issues. The FY19 budget requests \$8.78 million for spectrum management to balance demand for commercial mobile broadband with spectrum needs of federal agencies in support of national defense, homeland security, law enforcement, and public safety. As part of its spectrum management budget, NTIA requests Congressional authorization to negotiate leases with private entities that would expand their access to federal spectrum. For advanced communications research, the FY19 budget requests \$8.46 million to support scientific knowledge of radio spectrum to develop, test, and evaluate innovative approaches to spectrum access and efficiency. Lastly, the FY19 budget requests \$8.27 million for broadband programs to provide technical assistance and guidance to bring broadband to communities across America.³

IV. SELECT ISSUES

Given the Committee's jurisdiction over the NTIA, members may expect a wide-ranging discussion of important policy matters, including:

- *FirstNet*: The Nationwide Interoperable Public Safety Broadband Network, or FirstNet, was authorized as part of the Middle Class Tax Relief Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96) to develop a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network in the 700 MHz band. States were given the option to opt-in to FirstNet's planned network or choose an alternative. As of January 19, 2018, all 50 states, 5 territories, and the District of Columbia have accepted FirstNet's plan to deliver a wireless broadband network for first responders.⁴
- *Public Safety/NG-911*: The 9-1-1 system was designed to provide a universal, easy-to-remember number for people to reach police, fire, or emergency medical assistance. The National 9-1-1 program was authorized in 2004 to work with states, technology providers, and public safety officials, and to provide grants to update 9-1-1 so it may work with new communications technologies. The program is jointly administered by NTIA with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. As part of the Next Generation 9-1-1 Advancement Act of 2012, these two agencies received renewal of this grant program for states to develop next generation systems. In order to be eligible for the \$115 million in funds, states and other applicants must certify that they have not diverted 9-1-1 fees within the 180-day pay period prior to their applications. The agencies have yet to issue these grants and have stated on the record that the rules are to become effective this year.⁵

² NTIA is currently operated under a Continuing Resolution (P.L. 115-123) through March 23, 2018.

³ https://www.commerce.gov/sites/commerce.gov/files/us_department_of_commerce_budget_in_brief_fiscal_year_2019.pdf

⁴ <https://www.firstnet.gov/newsroom/press-release>

⁵ <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF17/20180214/106854/HHRG-115-IF17-Transcript-20180214.pdf>

- *Spectrum*: Demand continues to grow from commercial broadband providers for more radio frequency spectrum on both a licensed and unlicensed basis. At the same time, federal users depend on spectrum to fulfill a wide range of missions in national security, law enforcement, and public safety. NTIA is at the forefront of spectrum management for all federal agencies and is actively pursuing innovative approaches to protect federal interests, while also granting greater access to spectrum for commercial purposes.
- *Rural Broadband and Mapping*: Closing the digital divide by supporting broadband connectivity in rural areas of the country is a national priority. There are multiple federal programs aimed at closing this divide but, given limited resources, it is imperative federal programs target support to unserved areas. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-5) instructed NTIA to develop and maintain a comprehensive nationwide inventory map of broadband service. The map has not been updated by NTIA as of June 30, 2014, and the Federal Communications Commission took over broadband mapping efforts in 2015. There has been recent committee activity⁶ and a funding request from the Administration to have NTIA once again oversee a nationwide broadband map.
- *Internet Governance*: NTIA remains central to the Executive Branch's involvement in internet governance and works through an international multistakeholder process to reach consensus on a wide range of internet policy issues, including the domain name system (DNS), consumer data privacy, cybersecurity, digital copyrights, and protecting internet openness and freedom.

V. STAFF CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Sean Farrell, Tim Kurth, or Robin Colwell of the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

⁶ <https://energycommerce.house.gov/hearings/closing-digital-divide-broadband-infrastructure-solutions/>