



COMMITTEE ON
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DEMOCRATS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 11, 2018

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Pallone Remarks at Hearing on RAY BAUM's Act

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Communication and Technology Subcommittee Hearing on “RAY BAUM’s Act: A Bipartisan Foundation for Bridging the Digital Divide.”*

The RAY BAUM’s Act is a fitting tribute to the late staff director of this Committee – a man who committed his life until the very end to public service. Ray brought an unflinching bipartisan approach to legislation.

And through our bipartisan efforts, we were able to include a number of members’ bills as part of the RAY BAUM’s Act, making important headway on many issues this Committee prioritizes. I cannot list them all now. There are too many. But a few sections stand out to me.

Perhaps the most prominent provisions within the RAY BAUM’s Act are those originally stemming from the Viewer Protection Act. Those provisions make sure viewers across the country don’t lose access to the over-the-air stations they depend on in the wake of the world’s first spectrum incentive auction that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) concluded last year.

The law dedicated \$50 million to educating consumers about the repack to ensure they do not lose service and suffer minimal disruption. I understand the FCC is working on that issue now, and I look forward to hearing about how things are going from our witnesses.

The final law also included the Securing Access to Networks in Disasters Act or the SANDY Act. Superstorm Sandy devastated my district in New Jersey, and we saw firsthand how critical communications networks can be during emergencies. Of course, since then major hurricanes like Maria and Michael have once again demonstrated the need for continual vigilance and preparation. So called “100-year” storms and floods are becoming more and more commonplace as a result of climate change.

The SANDy Act takes an important step toward fixing longstanding problems by elevating the critical role that lifesaving communications systems play during emergencies. Whether it be wireline and mobile telephone, the internet, radio, broadcast television, cable or satellite services, this elevation will help ensure these services can be restored faster.

This law also frees up more spectrum for consumers, targets overseas robocallers and fraudsters, deploys broadband infrastructure to people that desperately need it, and more.

And now that the RAY BAUM's Act is the law of the land, we must continue working together to rigorously oversee its implementation. I look forward to starting that process today and conducting more oversight next Congress.

With that I yield one minute of my remaining time to Ms. Eshoo and the following minute to Ms. Matsui.

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