

Opening Statement of Republican Leader Bob Latta
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“STELAR Review: Protecting Consumers in an Evolving Media
Marketplace”
June 4, 2019

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the subcommittee holding this hearing today and I thank our panel of witnesses for testifying.

Today’s hearing once again considers the interplay between local broadcasters and direct broadcast satellite services – namely the “Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act Reauthorization,” known as “STELAR.” Key provisions of STELAR expire at the end of 2019, and I’m pleased this subcommittee is continuing this process on the question of reauthorization that we started last year with a broader hearing examining the current state of the video marketplace.

In this subcommittee’s hearing last September, we learned about changes in consumers’ viewing habits, such as the continuing rise of over-the-top video services, and notable shifts of advertising expenditures across the various mediums. Nevertheless, while online video services flourish and deliver exciting and innovative viewing alternatives, the bedrock of our video marketplace remains local broadcast programming. All of us rely

on our local broadcasters for news, emergency updates, weather, traffic, community engagement, and local interest programming. Accordingly, this subcommittee has a duty to ensure that local broadcasters retain the ability to invest in infrastructure and programming that keeps all Americans connected to their communities.

For 30 years, Congress has also played a key role in ensuring that rural Americans who are unable to receive an over-the-air broadcast network signal, are able to receive local news and content via direct broadcast satellite services. Congress accomplished this in 1988 by creating a statutory Copyright license fee that helped the direct broadcast satellite industry take root. But the video marketplace continues to evolve and, accordingly, every five years, we carefully reexamine whether this model should be reauthorized, repealed, or revised. Through each iteration of what we now call STELAR, we ask the expert subject matter agencies to report on the effectiveness of statutory license fee model, and we hold hearings calling upon a broad collection of stakeholders representing both consumers and industry participants. I'm pleased that we have again seated a qualified panel of experts who can assist this committee to paint an accurate picture of this market. It's important that we foster a competitive video marketplace AND ensure that all Americans continue to receive access to unbiased local news reports, up-to-the-minute weather updates, and critical information during emergencies.

I look forward to working with the Chairman and the members of the subcommittee as we carefully consider reauthorization. Thank you again to our witnesses and I yield back.