

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Our Wireless Future: Building A Comprehensive Approach to Spectrum
Policy”
July 16, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to welcome our witnesses to this hearing on spectrum. Almost two years ago, we held a hearing on the so-called Race to 5G, and as I said at the hearing – this is a sprint, not a marathon. Some may be concerned about overhyping the situation using such competitive terminology, but I believe it’s even more disconcerting if we undersell. Even as we speak, competitors in Asia and Europe are running full speed ahead to be the global leader. Maybe we need an even more dramatic term to convey the immediacy of the situation, and how our success in the 5G race will revolutionize American competitiveness and further strengthen our position in the global economy.

As you all know, my background is in radio. My wife and I owned and operated our own radio station in Oregon for many years. I’m pretty sure I’m the only member of Congress who has ever had to wire in a transmitter! But it has been remarkable to witness the acceleration of change and advancement in technology in recent years. For example,

think back to the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which focused primarily on how local and long-distance rates could become more competitive. But ultimately, this bill instilled the light-touch regulatory regime that provided the building blocks to the internet infrastructure we have come to know and depend on. Similarly, the 5G revolution will deliver on priorities for this committee – from closing the digital divide, making cities smarter, to improving our grid, consumer benefits such as faster and more advanced devices and the Internet of Things, improved industrial manufacturing, improved health care outcomes, and of course the future of transportation – to things we can't fully conceptualize today.

We need to be thinking strategically about spectrum availability, infrastructure deployment, and risks to our supply chain as all of these pieces need to work together in unison for our success in 5G.

If we fall behind on any one aspect, it will be a detriment to our future. If you think that sounds too dramatic, our adversaries certainly understand this fact. The potential threats represented by equipment from suspect entities has been well publicized, so I will not eat up a lot of discussion here on that issue, which will be better addressed at a hearing on supply chain we will hopefully have here soon. I'm referring

to the recent report by The New York Times on Russian propaganda efforts. The story, “*Your 5G Phone won’t hurt you, but Russia wants you to think otherwise,*” is a review of a media outlet known as RT America running stories of health risks of 5G deployment. RT America of course is a division of Russia Today, which has been referred to as “the Kremlin’s principal international propaganda outlet,” by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. We certainly shouldn’t dismiss whether there is a health concern, so I will look forward to hearing from the expert panel. However, I must say when a Russian outlet is reporting on this and at the same time Russia is pushing ahead with their 5G efforts, we should take that into account in considering the stakes.

Moving forward, to become the world’s leader in 5G deployment brings tough decisions. The 5G marketplace requires more spectrum as quickly as possible. We must also carefully balance this demand with our responsibility to consider the effects on incumbent spectrum users, and the value they provide to the American consumer. Today’s witnesses can help us refine this equation, and I look forward to hearing how all Americans, particularly those in rural areas like Oregon, can receive the full benefits of the 5G revolution.

Remembering back to our previous efforts, it will take this committee exercising its expertise on this sector, working in a bipartisan manner, and finding the right recipe needed on regulatory reforms and international harmonization to make this technology a reality.

Thank you, and I yield back.