

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Hearing on “Legislating to Secure America’s Wireless Future”  
September 27, 2019

Today, we are considering a series of bills to secure America’s wireless future. They will ensure that the government manages federal and commercial spectrum more efficiently to promote innovation and better serve all Americans. They also will guarantee that our wireless networks are secure from foreign adversaries that may wish to spy on Americans or do us harm.

I applaud the work of Chairman Doyle and Ranking Member Latta in introducing the SHARE Act. Their bill will cement the long-standing policy that our nation’s key agencies—the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—remain responsible for spectrum policy. These expert agencies can act as impartial judges to balance the demands and interests of spectrum stakeholders such as the Department of Defense, the Federal Aviation Administration, public safety, and commercial carriers.

At our hearing in July, we heard that the management of federal government spectrum requires a strong central voice at NTIA. And I think the SHARE Act does a great deal to help NTIA meet the mission-critical needs of government agencies in a more efficient and modern way.

The FCC, likewise, must remain in the driver’s seat when it comes to commercial spectrum. For that reason, I am pleased the SHARE Act requires the FCC to look for ways to expand and improve the revolutionary spectrum sharing techniques being rolled out in the Citizen’s Broadband Radio Service.

When it comes to securing these networks from foreign adversaries, I want to thank Ranking Member Walden, and Representatives Matsui and Guthrie for partnering with me to introduce the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act. Our legislation will prohibit the spending of federal dollars on suspect communications equipment and services that undermine national security.

Our bill also establishes a one-billion-dollar reimbursement program to help small carriers remove compromised equipment and replace it with secure alternatives.

As we have heard, much of the global supply chain for telecommunications equipment flows through China at one point or another. And Chinese industrial policies allow state-run manufacturers like Huawei to sell suspect equipment to American providers cheaper than nearly anyone else. Although many of the bigger carriers have avoided these threats, it still is a significant issue for smaller and more rural carriers who built their networks using suspect equipment.

Communications networks are interconnected and that means that one weak link can harm the whole system. We must help smaller carriers remove suspect equipment for the good of the entire country.

Representative Kinzinger and Chairman Doyle also have legislation on this point that would help the federal government better share supply chain risk information with the communications providers.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. I also want to briefly recognize Dean Brenner, on today's panel, who is a fellow Monmouth County, New Jersey native. Welcome.