

Statement of Chairman Mike Doyle
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on
"Accountability and Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission"
2123 Rayburn House Office Building
December 5, 2019

Good morning, and welcome to the Subcommittee on Communication and Technology's hearing on "Accountability and Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission." I'm glad to welcome our witnesses back before the Subcommittee.

I know it's been 7 months since we had you before us and I know that you've all missed the warm, welcoming atmosphere of our hearing room – but despite that passage of time, many issues that were of concern to us then still remain unresolved today.

For example, I asked about the investigation into phone carriers selling the real time location of nearly every American. Mr. Chairman, you told me that even after more than a year had passed we still couldn't tell whether this practice had stopped; couldn't say whether impacted individuals had been notified; and couldn't tell us if Members of Congress and law enforcement had their locations sold or tracked.

And in June of this year you told Senator Blumenthal that you were wrapping up your investigation and would have recommendations shortly. That was 6 months ago, and we still don't have them!

Chairman Pallone and I wrote to the Chairman in November asking for an update, and we got a response yesterday, saying that he now expects an answer from the Enforcement Bureau by the end of January! And the Chairman says the he will share those results with us as soon as practicable.

We'll be interested to learn when that will be, Mr. Chairman.

Looking at your announcement yesterday about your "new new plan" with Mobility Fund 2, it seems that you have finally realized that the data you collected is garbage and that you need to go back and do this all over again.

Everyone has been telling you that for years, and instead of acting decisively, folks in rural America will have to wait even longer to get broadband as you finally collect the data that you need.

At our last hearing, 7 months ago - and the hearing 9 months before that! - members brought up these same concerns, and here we are with you just yesterday announcing that you are kicking off another lengthy rulemaking process to try again to fix this process.

And stamping your new plan “5G” doesn’t change the fact that communities where these funds are desperately needed have been waiting years - and will have to wait even longer because of a bungled process.

And to add insult to injury, you aren’t even taking action against the carriers that submitted the faulty or fraudulent data in the first place. What’s their incentive in the future to provide accurate data if they know they’re going to get a pass?

Where is the justice for the people and communities who have suffered because of this?

Mr. Chairman, I would remind you that you’re charged with protecting and serving the American people, not the telecom industry!

Shifting gears, and in a more holiday spirit here, I am pleased about Chairman Pai’s recent comments regarding the T-Band. This spectrum is used by first responders around the country, and as reports have shown, the value of selling this band will not even come close to covering their relocation costs.

In Allegheny County alone, where I live, it could cost upwards of 250 million dollars for public safety to relocate to other spectrum. I think that once and for all we need to repeal this mandate. It makes no sense to me or many on this Committee to go forward with it.

And, finally, regarding C-Band, I am pleased that you have finally come around to see the benefits of a public auction.

For all the discussion about the need for speed in this debate, you’ve unfortunately been moving at a glacial pace.

Questions of the Commission’s legal authority remain, and the threat of lawsuits on those grounds still hang heavily over the Commission. I, along with Subcommittee Vice Chair Matsui, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Gianforte, have introduced the C-Band Act, and similar legislation has been introduced in the Senate.

I believe Congress must move to pass legislation authorizing an auction in this band and resolve the Commission’s Authority, to ensure a fair and transparent auction, and capture auction revenue so that it may be used to pay for the deployment of rural broadband, Next Generation 911, and closing the digital divide.

We all know that if we want to address these challenges the federal government needs to provide the funding for it.

The C-Band auction represents our last best chance to do that in the foreseeable future, and I stand ready to work with my colleagues on the Committee and in the Senate to address this issue promptly and swiftly.

We need real solutions to address these problems, real protections for the American people, and accountability from our federal regulators and industries that they oversee.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here today; I look forward to your testimony.

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