

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Robert E. Latta
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Accountability and Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission.”
December 5, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning. Thank you all for testifying today. I appreciate that you're always accessible and willing to travel across the country to see how the FCC's regulations are affecting companies and consumers. This year alone Commissioners O'Rielly and Carr both came to my district to speak on rural broadband, learn about telehealth and precision agriculture, and see how a fixed wireless operator serves a local Sheriff's office. And, a few years ago, Chairman Pai came to a town of less than 700 people to meet with a packed room of telephone providers to discuss rural call completion. Hearing and seeing firsthand what's happening outside of D.C. helps to put our work in perspective. Again, I appreciate the work all of you do and thank you for being here today.

At the hearing in May, Chairman Doyle and I expressed the need for real solutions to address illegal robocalls made to the American

people. Yesterday, we passed bipartisan, bicameral legislation out of this chamber that provides strong consumer protections to combat robocalls. But this problem will only be solved with a multi-pronged approach, and I want to thank Chairman Pai and the rest of the Commissioners for their work thus far in pushing industry companies to curb fraudulent robocalls.

I also want to thank the Commission for injecting some urgency into the 5.9 gigahertz band. I have long recognized the value of this spectrum for advancing vehicle safety and wireless innovation, and the Chairman's proposal starts the discussion to modernize the band. The ongoing uncertainty in the band has hindered investment and deployments of safety technologies and hampered the expansion of Wi-Fi services. Our focus should be on putting an end to that uncertainty, propel automobile safety, and unlock unlicensed use to help meet consumer demand for Wi-Fi services. I look forward to hearing more about how we can ensure both interests are advanced while protecting incumbents.

It's clear that Wi-Fi is important to our economy and our overall telecommunications landscape, which is why I am also interested to see that the FCC is looking at the 6 gigahertz band for additional unlicensed opportunities. At the same time, we must be aware of the critical services already in the 6 gigahertz band. I fully expect and encourage the Commission to continue its robust technical analysis and testing as they do with every band to ensure incumbents are afforded their appropriate protection levels from harmful interference. It's important that industry and the FCC work together to find a consensus position that allows the spectrum to be used as efficiently as possible.

The Commission has made a lot of advances in reducing regulatory red tape to promote fixed and wireless broadband infrastructure, and more work remains. In July, I led a letter with 9 of my colleagues on this subcommittee encouraging the FCC to clarify its rules regarding the statutory 5 percent cap on franchise fees – which some franchise authorities have stretched to include in-kind contributions that may deter investment in broadband infrastructure.

Part of the solution could be found by improving the underlying maps, and I'm pleased that this Committee favorably reported H.R. 4229, the Broadband DATA Act to the House floor, which I worked on with my friend from Iowa, Mr. Loeb sack. But the maps are only the beginning to closing the digital divide. Last year, Mr. Loeb sack and I included our Precision Agriculture Connectivity Act into the Farm Bill. This provision will spur broadband deployment on rural, agricultural lands to help farmers better utilize connected equipment. I was pleased to see that the Commission recently announced the creation of a Task Force, as mandated by our legislation, to offer advice and recommendations on how to best achieve this important goal. I look forward to continuing to work with industry and the Commission to further address connectivity issues.

On the mobile broadband side, there is more work to be done as our nation competes with China and others for 5G leadership. It is vital that we continue to look for opportunities in mid-band to extend the reach of 5G across the entire country, especially in rural communities. I

hope to hear more about the Commission's plan today for helping to speed buildout and prioritize deployment in rural America.

I also welcome any ideas the Commission may have on how Congress can better promote broadband deployment and competition in unserved and underserved areas.

Thank you again for testifying, and I yield back.