

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission”
September 17, 2020**

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and welcome back to the Commissioners.

As Republican Leader of the committee, and former Chairman of the full committee and this subcommittee, I’ve always taken our oversight role of the Commission seriously.

Sadly, the title of today’s hearing made clear this would be another partisan attack on President Trump - long on nasty quotes and short on facts. You’d think that when fires are destroying communities in the west and COVID is upending life nationwide Democrats could rise above partisan rancor and show America how we can work together to close the digital divide.

Fortunately, while Democrats on this committee put partisan politics first, the FCC—an independent agency-- has done a lot to ensure Americans are better connected. In fact, the FCC – under Chairman Pai’s leadership – has done a lot, period. Right here I have a list of achievements that spans many pages and details the work the FCC has

done to connect patients and doctors during the pandemic, close the digital divide, promote innovation, and protect consumers by stopping illegal robocalls to name a few. These, Mr. Chairman, are hardly opportunities missed.

In 2017, Chairman Pai announced his plan to protect consumers while ending burdensome regulations that hinder investment in broadband network deployment and resiliency. This allowed our networks to withstand the COVID-19 stress test while Socialists in Europe struggled to micromanage their networks under burdensome regulations like Democrats have advocated for here. Meanwhile, we could have been working to expand broadband access for low-income and minority consumers, but the Committee wasted five months, focusing instead on, I quote, “mak[ing] sure big corporations don’t use their power to undermine and silence their small competitors or the political opposition.” But I am pretty sure that didn’t happen—at least not by broadband providers. Meanwhile the farse of Net Neutrality was fully exposed as little more than a political head fake.

In the first two years under my Chairmanship, this committee ticked off many accomplishments:

- We reauthorized the FCC for the first time in over two decades;

- We required the Commission to increase spectrum availability for commercial use, which the Commission has far exceeded under Chairman Pai's leadership, including making an unprecedented 1,200 MHz of unlicensed spectrum for the Internet of Things;
- We required the Commission to improve public safety communications and they did – such as adopting rules on Vertical 911 Location Accuracy and implementing Kari's law, and implemented First Net... which first responders used last week in Oregon.

During COVID-19, while Democrats focused on attacking the President - putting politics before progress - the FCC was putting consumers first. Chairman Pai's Commission has taken over 15 major actions to combat illegal robocalls, streamlined the Lifeline program so more low-income consumers could access phone service and made over \$8 billion available to help rural consumers have access to high speed internet, with the intention of putting \$20 billion out the door through their Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

And where there are still challenges that require Congressional action, Republicans have put forth serious proposals to address these issues, and we would like to work across the aisle. In fact, we sent you an urgent letter in July, Mr. Chairman, asking you to put consumers and children first and hold a hearing to close the digital divide. But that did not happen.

Meanwhile, the Commission under Chairman Pai's leadership has had a busy year acting to keep Americans connected.

The 9th Circuit has upheld the majority of the FCC's small cell wireless infrastructure order that helped bring our infrastructure siting regulations into the 5G-Era. The largest mid-band spectrum auction in our nation's history is on track to begin in less than three months and 5G deployment is under way. And, through the Broadband DATA Act, the FCC is starting its work to update the maps and pushing out significant funding for rural broadband deployment.

Today, I look forward to celebrating the successes of the past four years and efforts close the digital divide.

I would like to end by thanking Energy and Commerce alum, Commissioner Mike O'Rielly, for his many years of public service. He

has been a champion for the free market, an advocate for consumers, and fought to keep FCC actions within the bounds of Congressional authority as articulated by the Congress. His expertise will be missed and I wish him and his family well in their next adventure.

I yield back.