

**Opening Statement of Congressman Richard Hudson
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Strengthening Our Communications Networks to Meet the Needs
of Consumers”
October 6, 2020**

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Energy and Commerce committee, and this subcommittee, have a rich history of bipartisanship.

We have come together many times on solutions to tackle tough issues...

...like securing our communications supply chain, combatting robocalls, and improving our broadband maps to ensure resources go to the people who need them most.

We all share the goal to close the digital divide and ensure ALL Americans are connected.

I have concerns with some of the proposals today...
... and appreciate the opportunity for a robust discussion and debate on legislation from both sides of the aisle.

My colleagues and I are leading and support solutions to lift the permitting and regulatory burdens so we speed up the deployment of America's broadband infrastructure.

INFRASTRUCTURE

This is the kind of approach we wanted before Democrats chose to jam through reckless levels of funding for proposals that lack the critical, targeted funding necessary to ensure resources get to the people who need them.

As we debated in our recent markup, the Majority's partisan agenda has the potential to generate out of control inflation while wasting billions of taxpayer dollars on a partisan wish list.

This will not drive results for reliable broadband in communities like mine in North Carolina.

BTOP

In 2009, Congress enacted the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act under President Obama and spent billions of dollars on broadband through the BTOP [*bee-top*].

This federal funding was not targeted to unserved areas and not based on accurate broadband maps.

Across the country, this led to wasteful overbuilding.

BTOP was a failure across the nation, and without changes, the Senate infrastructure bill and Reconciliation package is on the same path.

This package gives nearly unlimited discretion to the Assistant Secretary of NTIA and states to impose burdensome restrictions on carriers, like Net Neutrality obligations.

It prioritizes funding in areas which already have access to broadband, which could lead to overbuilding. The problem is the market is already in these areas and if we are going to spend billions of dollars then it needs to go to areas that have no access.

From broadband, to energy, and nearly every sector that this committee has jurisdiction over...

...the Senate Infrastructure package lacks any improvements to today's outdated permitting processes and regulations.

FCC

Further, at a time when Congress is pushing an unprecedented BILLIONS of dollars of broadband funding, with minimal guardrails, to the executive branch, this Administration has yet to even nominate people for the top two most important jobs for broadband: a Chair of the Federal Communications Commission...and an Assistant Secretary for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

This is the longest it has taken any President in HISTORY to nominate an FCC Chair.

Earlier this year, my colleagues requested that the Energy and Commerce Committee hold an FCC oversight hearing, and today I would like to reiterate that request. We should be leading to ensure accountability.

CONCLUSION

We all want to close the digital divide once and for all, and the People's House should be allowed to have some input on these massive programs...

...including on permitting reforms to spur deployment which should have been included in the Senate Infrastructure Package.

But the fact remains that this Committee didn't write that bill... and Democrats have taken a go-it-alone, partisan approach to print and spend an insane amount of money in their linked-reckless package.

We should work together in a bipartisan way and honor the rich history of this committee.

Finally, since Leader Rodgers is unable to be here, I'm thrilled to give a warm welcome to one of her constituents, Todd Brandenburg with PocketiNet, [*pocket-i-net*] who is testifying before us today

I look forward to hearing about his good work to deploy broadband.

I yield back.

