

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Communications and Technology Subcommittee Hearing on “Liftoff: Unleashing Innovation in Satellite Communications Technologies.”

February 8, 2023

I am pleased to again be discussing bipartisan steps this Committee can take to advance the next frontier of the commercial space industry.

The stakes could not be higher for the American satellite marketplace. Just this last week we all witnessed the Chinese government’s balloon flying high above American airspace. This incident demonstrated the urgency for us to explore every method possible to protect our nation from these and other aerial threats and prevent our foreign adversaries from using our skies for their surveillance missions.

Satellites have a role to play in achieving these objectives and the legislation we are discussing today will help ensure that our satellite marketplace remains competitive, nimble and protected from untrusted actors. Today’s legislation will also allow satellites to play a greater role in helping first responders and the public when natural disasters and other emergencies strike. Better earth imaging will also help us monitor and track some of the most urgent global issues like the worsening climate crisis.

First, I appreciate that we are considering H.R. 675, the Secure Space Act, bipartisan legislation that I reintroduced with Chair Rodgers last week. This bill would extend the Secure and Trusted Communications Network Act framework to the U.S. licensing of non-geostationary orbit satellites to protect the public from untrusted entities and foreign adversaries. As innovations flourish, we must protect the satellite marketplace and its relevant supply chains from threats by non-trusted actors. We cannot risk our satellite networks facing the same challenges as our other communications networks, here and globally.

We will also be discussing the Satellite and Telecommunications Streamlining Act, a bipartisan discussion draft that Chair Rodgers and I introduced last year. The legislation would streamline the satellite licensing process at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for certain satellite applications. This legislation will strengthen the competitiveness of the United States’ satellite industry, which is imperative given other countries, including our foreign adversaries, are making aggressive moves to dominate the industry.

There is no question that the United States must remain a market leader in this sector. Failure to do so risks our nation falling behind our counterparts across the globe, including

February 8, 2023

Page 2

China, in producing cutting-edge consumer innovations and fortifying our public safety and national security capabilities.

We are also considering H.R. 682, the Launch Communications Act, bipartisan legislation reintroduced last week by Representatives Soto and Dunn. This legislation would enhance the ability of entities to launch rockets from the United States by streamlining the FCC's process for authorizing access to spectrum for commercial space launches and space reentries. It would also encourage continued competitiveness and growth in the American commercial space industry.

The Precision Agriculture Satellite Connectivity Act, a bipartisan discussion draft from subcommittee Chair Latta and Representative Kelly would encourage advancement and innovation of precision agriculture. This legislation requires the FCC to review its rules related to certain satellite services to develop recommendations to promote precision agriculture and report its findings to Congress.

Finally, the Advanced, Local Emergency Response Telecommunications (ALERT) Parity Act, is a bipartisan discussion draft from Representatives Johnson and Schrier that was also introduced last Congress. It would allow satellite communications providers to access spectrum in temporary situations so that mobile customers can retain access to 911 and other lifesaving services where service is not available. This could be in circumstances where the area is remote, or where the area is experiencing service outages caused by natural disasters. With this legislation, Americans would not have to worry about being able to reach first responders and loved ones in an emergency.

Every bill and discussion draft we are considering today is bipartisan and we look forward to hearing feedback from these witnesses and other stakeholders. I am determined to continue working with Chairs Rodgers and Latta, Ranking Member Matsui, and other members of this Committee so that we can make sure the United States leads the rest of world in the satellite communications industry. Time is certainly of the essence.

I welcome our panelists and look forward to hearing from them. It is also nice to see that a familiar face will be before us today— David Goldman who served as this Subcommittee's Democratic Chief Counsel for several years. David, thanks in advance for being here today. And I yield back the balance of my time.