

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Defending America’s Wireless Leadership.”
March 10, 2023**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our witnesses for providing your expertise.

Today’s hearing on Defending America’s wireless leadership will help inform the Energy and Commerce Committee’s work on spectrum policy...

...which is crucial to maintaining U.S. economic and national security.

Spectrum Auction Authority

For the first time ever, the FCC’s spectrum auction authority has expired.

On February 27, the House passed my bipartisan legislation with Ranking Member Pallone to extend the FCC’s authority to issue spectrum licenses until May 19.

This would have given Congress enough time to come to an agreement on a more comprehensive package addressing many issues in the communications and technology space.

For reasons unknown to me, certain Senators decided to risk U.S. wireless leadership over a date change. A date change. That is unacceptable.

We must come together and develop strong spectrum policy here in the United States that is informed by our values that support human flourishing and innovation.

We cannot afford to cede leadership to China and other authoritarian countries who abuse their technology to suppress freedom and assert command and control over people's lives.

I urge the Senate to act swiftly to pass H.R. 1108 to extend the FCC's auction authority through May 19 so we can come together and pass a longer-term solution to this issue.

It's the Senate's only option on the table right now to get this back on track.

Make no mistake: getting this right will be key to defending America's wireless leadership.

U.S. Leadership

For decades, American policies rooted in promoting economic security and competition have yielded breakthroughs in wireless technology.

Thirty years ago, Congress and the FCC pioneered a bold new way to manage spectrum by auctioning spectrum instead of giving it away through a lottery system.

This light-touch regulatory framework has brought billions of dollars into the U.S. Treasury through fierce competition...

...and ensured that entities who have a spectrum license invest in technologies that utilize that spectrum as efficiently as possible.

This approach has fostered innovation in everything from faster broadband speeds, precision agriculture, self-driving cars and vehicles, and smart manufacturing.

While the demand for commercial spectrum continues to rise, so do the needs of our military, our border agents, and our researchers.

In each new generation of technology, we find innovative solutions to balance these needs, and utilize spectrum resources in a way that fits our nation's best interest.

Spectrum policy is crucial to our national security policy, and we must stay true on the principles that have enabled our success in wireless technology...

...including by continuing to make spectrum available for commercial use.

But our future economic competitiveness cannot rest on our past success.

Competition with China

The Chinese Communist Party and other adversaries seek to undermine U.S. leadership, and they will stop at nothing short of domination.

China, Russia, and other authoritarian countries have put forward a competing vision for technology built on a foundation of surveillance and control.

State-backed companies seek to write the rules of the road that could use wireless technology to suppress free speech...

...surveil their citizens...

...and thwart the economic competitiveness of the United States and our allies.

Their governments use top-down, command and control policies to make spectrum available on a moment's notice.

They provide prescriptive regulations and guidance to where and when state-backed entities should deploy service.

This is not how the United States operates. We believe in private sector innovation and spectrum policy is at the heart of technological innovation.

If we do not take a leadership role in writing our wireless future, China will.

And writing our wireless future starts here at home, with comprehensive spectrum policy.

Closing

I look forward to today's hearing. It is extremely timely as we again remind individuals in the Senate on the importance of America's spectrum leadership.

Thank you, and I yield back.