

**Opening Statement for Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
“Listen Here: Why Americans Value AM Radio”  
June 6, 2023**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF AM RADIO**

Thank you, Chairman Latta, and welcome to our panel of witnesses.

My constituents in Eastern Washington rely on AM radio.

It is how they hear the news in their communities....

... listen to sports...

...and receive information during emergencies.

In many parts of my district, FM radio is spotty and there is no access to broadband, so AM radio is the only option.

## **MOVING AWAY FROM AM RADIO**

Which is why it's concerning that some vehicle manufacturers have taken steps recently to remove AM radios from new car models.

This is in part a result of the Biden Administration's rush to a green agenda as they push for Electric Vehicles, because electric vehicle batteries cause interference to AM frequencies, resulting in bad reception.

The decision to remove AM radio from cars would affect tens of millions of Americans—some estimates suggest that more than 45 million Americans tune into AM radio each month.

While people in some parts of the country have been able to take advantage of alternative options in vehicles for accessing AM radio, like through a streaming service...

...many parts of the country still lack access to reliable broadband services, meaning this option is unavailable.

That includes people in my community who are raising the alarm and sending the message that they like their AM Radio.

## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

They're concerned that they could lose access to vital information services like the National Public Warning System.

Unlike its FM counterpart, AM radio signals travel long distances and pass through obstacles such as buildings, hills, and dense vegetation.

These characteristics ensure that potentially lifesaving information reaches a large audience, especially in rural areas with limited access to other forms of communication.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, has also worked to reinforce AM Radio base stations to mitigate risks resulting from events like natural disasters.

## **INFORMING COMMUNITIES**

And rural communities in particular rely on the services provided by AM radio...

...especially when they have only limited access to high-speed broadband and streamed services, or don't have any access at all.

These services are important for farmers and ranchers, who use AM radio to receive information on the weather, crop reports, and other vital information for their livelihoods.

AM radio fosters a sense of local identity... connecting people through regional programming that reflects the unique perspectives and traditions of their communities.

Local media on AM radio is closer to the people, telling the stories and sharing the perspectives that the national news doesn't cover and sometimes ignores...

...and it plays a crucial role in government accountability, acting as a watchdog for local school boards, county officials, regional courts, and other government bodies.

Further, AM radio continues to be a key outlet for talk radio shows to connect with audiences across the country.

Rush Limbaugh, for instance, had around 15 million listeners tuning in each week to his show, which was broadcast across 650 stations at its peak.

These are vital sources of information that keep people engaged and connected to their local community, region, and the voices and perspectives they value in their lives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Whether they're tuning in for local news, agricultural and weather reports, information during an emergency, or to listen to their favorite talk radio personality...

...AM radio continues to be a popular way for Americans to stay connected.

I look forward to our discussion, and I'm grateful for our experts today who share our goal to both celebrate American innovation and to ensure people can use this critical communications tool and the listen to AM Radio stations important to them.

I yield back.