

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Communications & Technology Ranking Member Doris Matsui**  
  
*Hearing on “Listen Here: Why Americans Value AM Radio”*  
  
**June 6, 2023**

Thank you, Chairman Latta.

I’m glad we’re holding this hearing today. While this issue has been gaining attention nationally, I think this Committee can help raise awareness among consumers.

As I said in my statement announcing this hearing -- AM radio provides Americans a crucial public service.

Whether that’s information during an emergency, local news, or community-specific programming, AM radio delivers for consumers.

While the media landscape continues to evolve, AM radio remains a mainstay for millions of Americans.

According to the National Association of Broadcasters 82 million Americans listen to AM stations each month.

For these consumers, AM radio is indispensable.

But even for those of us who aren’t listening daily, AM radio represents a critical lifeline when disaster strikes.

Californians know all too well the need for diverse and redundant emergency notifications.

During wildfires, texts and other mobile alerts provide timely information that can save lives. But these notifications only work when mobile networks are still intact and operational.

If they fail, as we’ve seen after wildfires, hurricanes, and tornados, we must have a backup.

That’s where AM radio comes into play. Because the system is resilient and the spectrum can travel long distances, AM radio is a reliable backbone for the Emergency Alert System.

FEMA acknowledges this role when describing the Emergency Alert System saying...

“In many cases, radio and TV stations continue to operate when other means of alerting the public are unavailable, providing a layer of resiliency.”

Many subscription services depend on internet access and other public warning methods rely on utility power.

In California wildfires have destroyed cell towers and taken utility power down over large areas.

For the many California families that have been forced to flee their homes without a mobile signal or power, going without AM radio would be unthinkable and unacceptable.

Imagine in that moment, with your family in the car, frantically looking for emergency information only to find out your car doesn't have AM radio.

I don't think anyone should have that experience.

With more than 30 million vehicles registered in California, the loss of AM radio in cars would represent a devastating setback for emergency communications.

But we know AM radio is more than just a lifeline during an emergency. For many, it represents an irreplaceable connection to their community.

As local news options grow few and far between, AM radio offers free hyper-local journalism.

From high school football scores to city council coverage, AM radio can provide consumers with local coverage they can't get anywhere else.

And in many areas, AM radio is broadcasting in Spanish, Vietnamese, and other languages spoken in the community.

So, in more ways than one, AM radio remains a lifeline.

As we continue to push advances in mobility, it's important that we balance innovation with access. I'm hopeful this hearing will help us do just that.

I'm excited to hear from our witnesses and with that, I yield the balance of my time.