

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Doris O. Matsui

Hearing on “Oversight of President Biden's Broadband Takeover”

November 29, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Latta. I’m thrilled to be here for this hearing; it’s an important one. Today, the FCC is appearing with a full compliment of commissioners. While much was accomplished with a 2 – 2 commission, it’s not how the agency is intended to function. With five commissioners, I know Chairwoman Rosenworcel is ready to use the full authority of the Commission to increase connectivity and boost innovation.

And, it’s the first appearance of Commissioner Gomez. Commissioner Gomez ... congratulations again. I know you’re ready to bring your experience to bear supporting more dynamic and inclusive communications policy. This fully functional FCC couldn’t come at a more critical time. The opportunities and challenges the agency faces will have long-lasting implications for the digital economy. From expanding broadband connectivity, increasing cybersecurity, promoting digital equity and more, the FCC must act with urgency.

But this Subcommittee and Congress also has a vital role to play. I can think of no more pressing example than the Affordable Connectivity Program. The ACP has already helped more than 22 million families afford a broadband connection. Whether that’s for the first time, or when you need a little extra help making ends meet, the A-C-P program is working. But you don’t need to take my word for it. Earlier this month, a bipartisan group of governors sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to “fund this critical program.”

Signed by the governors of Washington, Utah, and Michigan among others, the governors of many states represented on this Subcommittee are on record for sustaining the ACP. As they noted in the letter, “Preserving the ACP will allow us to build upon the progress we’ve made in expanding connectivity rather than falling behind in a mission we cannot afford to lose.” I couldn’t agree more.

President Biden included \$6 billion for ACP in his supplemental request. The Republican governors who signed that letter urged us in Congress to “work collaboratively with the Biden Administration...to ensure...the ACP receives additional funding.”

So, I’m asking my Republican colleagues, lets heed that call and get this done. Our constituents are counting on us. I also want to take a moment to talk about another bipartisan priority in the Administration’s supplemental funding request – addressing the shortfall in the rip and replace program.

Back in October, I wrote to President Biden urging him to include full funding for the Supply Chain Reimbursement Program. As an original cosponsor of the bipartisan rip and replace bill, I believe it is a national security imperative that we immediately remove every last piece of vulnerable equipment from American networks.

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Until this shortfall is addressed, the United States will continue to be exposed to an unacceptable national security risk. Both Democrats and Republicans understand the threat this Chinese gear poses, so let's work together on a bipartisan basis to get this done.

I'm also eager to discuss the FCC's role in spectrum governance. The global race to 5 and 6G is still white hot, satellite broadband service is taking off, and Wi-Fi continues to create massive opportunities for Americans. To stay ahead of our peers, the federal government must be a driving force in maintaining a healthy spectrum pipeline. For that to happen, it needs to speak with one voice.

That's why I was so glad to see the release of the National Spectrum Strategy and Presidential Memorandum. Taken together, they represent a roadmap for continued U.S. leadership. The FCC will have a foundational role in implementation and I'm excited to discuss those documents here today.

But there's much more we'll discuss at this hearing like maintaining an open internet and preventing digital discrimination. I want to thank the Chairwoman and Commissioners for appearing before us and with that, I yield the remainder of my time.