

**The Honorable Earl L. “Buddy” Carter**

**1. What can the Commission commit to doing that would encourage broadcasters of news, information and music to provide consumers more local, original content?**

I agree that local, original content plays a key role in our society and our media landscape.

I support Chairwoman Rosenworcel’s proposal to provide priority processing of certain FCC applications filed by broadcasters who regularly produce and air locally originated programming. I would be happy to discuss with your office other means of encouraging broadcasters to provide local content.

**2. As various streaming platforms have emerged, we have seen drastic changes to the digital media landscape. What steps should the FCC take to ensure that the large industry players promote a level playing field and negotiate in good faith with a broad array of smaller and independent content owners to foster a competitive video marketplace?**

Just as local content plays an important role in our media landscape, so does content produced by smaller, independent companies.

The Communications Act and the FCC’s rules require both broadcasters and multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs) – i.e., cable and direct broadcast satellite systems – to negotiate for carriage in good faith. 47 U.S.C. § 325(b)(3)(C)(ii)-(iii). The statute and the rules also take into account the size of the players in those negotiations. For example, so that small cable systems are not disadvantaged in negotiations with large broadcasters, we permit these systems to negotiate jointly with broadcast station groups that include stations reaching more than 20 percent of the country, subject to certain conditions. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 325(b)(3)(C)(vi).

The FCC’s rules also prohibit certain anticompetitive practices in carriage negotiations between cable channels and MVPDs. *See* 47 C.F.R. 76.1300 *et seq.*

Streaming platforms are not subject to these regulations. Given the recent changes in the media landscape that you mention, I would be happy to discuss this issue with your office.

**3. How do the rising costs of bundled programming impact streaming platforms’ ability to make niche channels or channels from independent content providers available to consumers?**

Streaming platforms are not currently subject to the FCC’s rules, such as the requirement that MVPDs negotiate for carriage in good faith with local broadcasters. Accordingly, streaming platforms’ negotiations with niche channels and independent content providers are governed by market conditions. I would be happy to discuss updates to the existing law with your office.

**The Honorable Ann Kuster**

**1. Commissioner Starks, the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program is facing a funding gap of over \$3 billion. The Biden Administration has requested that Congress provide \$3.1 billion to complete the rip**

**and replace work. As you well know, this program is critical to helping providers remove untrusted technologies from our communications networks to protect our national security. I was pleased to see that the FCC respond to this shortfall by extending the deadlines for some companies to complete this program work. Is the FCC considering additional steps to help providers complete the rip and replace work so they can continue serving their subscribers and providing service to the millions who roam on their networks?**

I strongly support Congressional efforts to fully fund the rip and replace program, and thank you for your leadership on the issue. The Commission takes its responsibility to ensure that Huawei and ZTE equipment and services are removed, replaced, and destroyed from our communications networks seriously. As you know, due to the \$3.1 billion shortfall many small and rural providers have been unable to fully complete their rip and replace obligations within the deadlines established by the Commission and Congress because we can only reimburse providers for incurred expenses at 40 cents on the dollar. These providers, serving small communities and rural locations, cannot afford to do it on their own.

While Congress considers whether to appropriate additional funds to close the \$3.1 billion shortfall, the Commission has taken steps to support providers participating in the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program. First, the Commission has granted individual requests for waiver of rip and replace deadlines for providers who are unable to timely and fully complete the removal, replacement, and disposal of Huawei and ZTE equipment and services without full reimbursement. We will continue to consider these waiver requests. Second, Commission staff are working with program participants to ensure that as providers incur reimbursable expenses, the Commission processes reimbursement claims expeditiously. Efficiently processing reimbursement claims will support providers so they can continue to invest in their networks and serve their customers.

**The Honorable Larry Buchson**

- 1. In the past I cosponsored legislation directing the FCC to study reforms to who pays into the Universal Service Fund, and understand that multiple Commissioners here today support USF reforms as well. I recognize that the Commission has asked Congress to recommend how the financial burden on consumers could be reduced as the contributions system for the universal service programs is reformed. But given the recent political decisions that have been issued by the FCC, I am wary of giving the Commission very broad discretion and rulemaking authority to do so. Do you have any preferences on the specific methodologies that the FCC would pursue if given such rulemaking authority to assess broadband providers and edge providers? Are there considerations for this committee to be aware of to ensure that USF reform would not increase the financial burden on consumers?**

I believe that the Commission should work closely with Congress on any potential reforms to the Universal Service Fund. If Congress grants the Commission additional authority to assess Universal Service Fund contributions on broadband providers and edge providers, I would

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carefully consider all methodologies and thoroughly review the record to appropriately scope any Universal Service Fund assessment. I agree that any solution must take into consideration the potential burden on consumers.