

**Opening Statement for Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Oversight of the National Telecommunications and Information
Administration”
December 5, 2023**

Thank you, Chairman Latta, and welcome back, Assistant Secretary Davidson.

We have much to discuss.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is responsible for managing federal spectrum use and awarding funds to deploy broadband.

In addition, the agency recently has been engaged in policy developments around artificial intelligence and advancing the Open Radio Access Network marketplace.

As our technology advances, NTIA’s role needs to evolve to keep up.

NTIA was last reauthorized in 1993, and reauthorizing the agency is overdue.

That is why this Committee passed the bipartisan NTIA Reauthorization Act, which we hope will become law soon.

In the meantime, we continue our oversight efforts to ensure that NTIA is fulfilling its mission.

NATIONAL SPECTRUM STRATEGY

Another shared priority is making spectrum available for commercial use, which is essential to maintain American leadership in next-generation wireless technology.

Last month, the NTIA released its National Spectrum Strategy.

This strategy identified spectrum bands to be studied to determine what could be made available for commercial use.

It also highlighted workforce shortage issues in spectrum engineering...

. . . and most importantly, reaffirmed NTIA's role as the manager of federal government spectrum.

One of the spectrum bands highlighted for study in the strategy stands out from the others—the lower 3 gigahertz (GHz) band.

This will be the second time in two years that the federal government will study this band.

This time, however, the study will be led by the NTIA, the expert agency on spectrum for the Executive Branch.

Unfortunately—and despite numerous requests---we have yet to receive the first feasibility study and a briefing on the results of that study from the Biden administration.

I will again echo that the administration needs to provide us with that information immediately, and I expect a full briefing once NTIA completes its new study on the results as well.

For America to continue its wireless leadership, we must make sure that spectrum resources are used as efficiently as possible...

...and that we continue to make spectrum available for commercial use in a way that best serves the American people.

PUBLIC WIRELESS SUPPLY CHAIN INNOVATION FUND

Additionally, the NTIA is responsible for administering the Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund, which seeks to advance the development and adoption of open and interoperable radio access networks, known as “O-Ran”.

The purpose of this program was to inject funding into an industry working to diversify the telecom network supply chain...

...and provide secure and affordable alternatives to equipment produced by Huawei and ZTE.

Unfortunately, since the program was launched in April, the NTIA has only awarded \$18 **million** out of the \$1.5 **billion** dollars appropriated to the program for projects that I am concerned will not achieve the goals set by Congress.

RURAL BROADBAND

Our Committee has been leading robust oversight this Congress to ensure that NTIA is taking seriously its Congressional mandate to make sure that the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program closes the digital divide.

Republicans on this Committee sent you a letter requesting that you reject state plans that would overbuild existing networks and ignore Congress’ mandate to be technology neutral, rather than use the BEAD money to serve all Americans.

I am encouraged that you recently rejected state plans that would have ignored these mandates.

I also hope to get an update on the Broadband Infrastructure Program, and how you have distributed those funds thus far.

An unprecedented amount of taxpayer dollars has been allocated in recent years to getting every American connected and closing the digital divide.

We'll continue to carry out the committee's oversight duties to ensure resources are going towards achieving this goal and aren't subject waste, fraud, and abuse.

Artificial Intelligence

Today's hearing will also be an opportunity to discuss the work that NTIA has been doing on artificial intelligence.

From AI accountability to open-source AI models, NTIA is taking steps to embrace the challenges and opportunities of AI and ensure America is leading.

This committee awaits your reports on these issues, which I hope will inform our own efforts on AI.

CONCLUSION

U.S. technological and communications leadership is essential for America to win the future.

I look forward to today's hearing and to discussing how we can leverage NTIA to make sure the U.S. is dominating in everything from spectrum and broadband to artificial intelligence.

Thank you, Assistant Secretary Davidson for being here.

I yield back.