

**Written Statement of
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Subcommittee on Communications & Technology**

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Introduction

Chairman Latta, Chair Rodgers, Ranking Member Matsui, Ranking Member Pallone, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

By law, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) serves as the President's advisor on telecommunications and information policy. We are serving in that role at a historic time, one filled with both challenge and opportunity.

Since my last appearance before the Subcommittee in May, we have made considerable progress toward the bipartisan initiatives that Congress tasked to NTIA. These include:

1. Connecting everyone in America to affordable, reliable high-speed Internet service, no matter where they live;
2. Maintaining American leadership in wireless innovation by developing a national spectrum strategy, a spectrum pipeline, and data-driven processes for long-term spectrum planning; and
3. Developing policies that will make for a better Internet – one that offers privacy, security, openness, and trust.

Affordability is a critical component in the Administration's effort to connect all Americans to high-speed Internet service, and Congress can help by acting now to address the President's supplemental funding request for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to ensure that millions of Americans can continue to afford to be connected.

Internet for All

NTIA continues its effort to connect the unconnected throughout America, including rural and other hard-to-reach parts of the country.

In June, we told every state and territory how much of the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment—or BEAD—state grant program funding they will be allocated. The next major milestone is submission of Initial Proposals for how states and territories will use those funds. NTIA has been working closely with states and territories to ensure that they submit

strong proposals by the December 27, 2023, deadline. To date, all 56 states and territories have put their proposals out for public comment and begun to submit them to NTIA.

NTIA is also engaging with stakeholders to ensure that our program sets states and territories up for success. For example, last month we addressed concerns that the BEAD letter of credit requirement could be a barrier to participation in the program. We issued a waiver providing specific alternatives that will encourage participation from a wide range of providers, while at the same time protecting taxpayer dollars. This is just one example of how NTIA works to collaborate with stakeholders to have our programs best achieve our goals.

Buy America

BEAD is not just a connectivity program; it is also a jobs and manufacturing program.

As President Biden said in his State of the Union address, “when we do these projects, we’re going to Buy American.” Under NTIA’s proposed approach to the Build America, Buy America provision of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, we expect that the vast majority of BEAD funding spent on equipment will flow to companies manufacturing that equipment here in the United States.

Industry is responding. We have already seen multiple companies announce that they are reshoring the manufacturing of fiber optic cable and electronic equipment, creating thousands of jobs across the country.

Other Internet for All Programs

While the BEAD program enters its next phase, NTIA is moving forward to implement our other Internet for All programs.

- Since May, NTIA announced approximately \$980 million in awards across 40 states and territories in our **Middle Mile** program, which invests in projects building regional networks that connect to national Internet networks. Projects are already beginning to launch.
- Our **Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program** has awarded more than \$1.86 billion in grants to support network deployment as well as devices and digital skills training for 226 Tribal entities. In July, we announced a second Notice of Funding Opportunity totaling nearly \$1 billion; applications are due in January.
- We have awarded all programmatic funds in our **Broadband Infrastructure Program** and the **Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program**. As projects funded by these important programs break ground across the country, NTIA is closely monitoring and evaluating their progress to ensure that dollars are being used wisely and consistent with program rules and goals.
- Finally, NTIA is developing Notices of Funding Opportunity for our **Digital Equity Capacity Building and Competitive Grant** programs after soliciting public comment. We expect every state and territory will have a Digital Equity plan in place next year.

Affordability is a key goal across our Internet for All programs, and it is a goal that Congress can help us achieve. The ACP has helped more than 22 million households subscribe to free or discounted Internet service—more than 1 in 6 households across the country.

The ACP will play an important role in the success of the Internet for All deployment programs. We know that a connection does not mean much if a family cannot afford it. We also know that ACP helps network providers make the business case to serve rural and remote communities. Congress should act now to address the President’s supplemental funding request to ensure that the ACP remains on firm financial footing and that over 22 million Americans can continue to stay connected.

Spectrum

Today, radio frequency spectrum plays a central, if unseen, role in American life. From the cell phones in our pockets to the satellites that help predict the weather, spectrum is among our Nation’s most vital and scarce national resources. The growing importance of connectivity, data, and intelligent applications promises increasing spectrum demand in the years to come—both from the private sector and to meet important federal missions.

We will only meet this demand with a coherent, long-term strategy: one that offers more certainty to industry and agencies, that supports innovation, and that will position the United States to lead the way internationally.

Last month, the White House issued a Presidential Memorandum on modernizing U.S. spectrum policy and announced that strategy.

The National Spectrum Strategy charts a whole-of-government approach to achieving these goals. The Strategy:

1. Identifies over 2,700 megahertz of spectrum to study for potential new uses by both the private sector and federal agencies—nearly double NTIA’s initial target. That includes more than 1,600 megahertz of midband spectrum—a frequency range in high demand for next-generation services like 5G and 6G. Bands identified include the lower 3 GHz (3.1-3.45 GHz) band, 5 GHz (5030-5091 MHz), 7-8 GHz (7125-8400 MHz), 18 GHz (18.1-18.6 GHz), and 37 GHz (37.0-37.6 GHz).
2. Calls for a new, long-term planning framework to bring together stakeholders—including industry and federal spectrum users—to uncover early and resolve conflicts.
3. Encourages the research and development of new technologies for spectrum management, including dynamic spectrum sharing. We must make better use of the airwaves we have—and technology will help.
4. Calls for a National Spectrum Workforce Plan to grow the diverse network of spectrum experts America needs to address the critical technology issues of the future.

Our next step is to make the Strategy’s call for action a reality. Within four months, NTIA will issue an Implementation Plan to carry out the Strategy.

Congress can aid efforts to meet spectrum demand by re-establishing the Federal Communications Commission’s important authority to auction spectrum.

Internet Policy

Artificial intelligence (AI) has captured the imagination of the public and policymakers. Advances in AI and machine learning systems can bring enormous benefits to people—from drug discovery to precision agriculture and beyond. But we will only realize the promise of AI if we address the serious risks and potential harms it raises. Those include concerns about safety, security, privacy, discrimination, and bias.

President Biden’s recent AI Executive Order, the most significant action any government has taken on AI, brings the power of the U.S. government to bear to manage AI’s risks and harness its benefits. As the President’s principal advisor on information policy, NTIA will play an important role in implementing the Order in coordination with our colleagues in the Department of Commerce. One area of our immediate focus is open-source AI systems, which pose unique risks, but also have the potential to support essential research and unleash innovation across the country, placing accessible AI tools in the hands of startups, scientists, and the public.

NTIA is also deeply engaged in a project we started early this year on AI accountability policy. We pose the question: what policies are needed to make sure that AI systems are behaving the way they say they are? We sought public feedback on what policies are needed to support the development of audits, assessments, and other mechanisms to build an AI accountability ecosystem. NTIA expects to release its findings in a report by the first quarter of next year.

AI is just one part of NTIA’s broad portfolio of Internet and telecom policy work. For example, NTIA is also proud to take on the role of co-chairing the President’s Task Force on Kids Online Health and Safety, alongside the Department of Health and Human Services. Among other things, the Task Force will examine how government and industry can better protect the health and safety of children online.

Other Initiatives

Each of these priorities is significant, and yet they do not capture NTIA’s full mandate.

We remain pleased with the growth of the FirstNet Authority to meet the needs of our nation’s first responders. This fall, the FirstNet Authority announced that it has surpassed 5 million connections, evidence that demand continues to grow for these critical emergency services.

A week ago, NTIA announced \$13 million in the next set of grants for our Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund program. This \$1.5 billion initiative supports the development of open and interoperable wireless networks to help drive competition, strengthen global supply chain resiliency, and lower costs for consumers. As we continue to make awards on a rolling basis, our team is preparing a second Notice of Funding Opportunity for the next phase of the program.

Reauthorization

NTIA's remit is broad, consequential, and growing. I have made it a priority to build an organization fit for NTIA's expanded mission. As part of that effort, I welcome the opportunity to work with Congress to update NTIA's existing authority and better address our issues that are of growing importance in the modern digital economy.

Conclusion

Given technology's growing role in our lives, NTIA's programs are about far more than technology and communications policy. They are about creating new jobs and economic opportunity for all Americans. They are about building a fairer and more equitable society here at home. They are about competing better on the global stage.

I look forward to working with this Subcommittee to help America meet this historic moment.

Thank you for inviting me to appear today, and I welcome your questions.