

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

Hearing on “Strengthening American Leadership in Wireless Technology”

January 23, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Hudson. I want to congratulate you on serving as the new Communications and Technology Subcommittee chair — and extend my congratulations to Chair Guthrie for heading the full committee. I look forward to working with you this Congress.

I’m glad we are starting with such a timely issue, on which we have a strong bipartisan track record. The last time this Subcommittee had a spectrum hearing, the FCC’s spectrum auction authority had just lapsed for the first time in history. Now, nearly two years later, the FCC is still deprived of this critical tool to unlock the full potential of our spectrum airwaves, leaving U.S. economic and national security at risk.

Spectrum is a key engine of wireless innovation. It supports a wide range of technologies from remote surgery to autonomous vehicles and broadband. Our consumers, businesses, and federal agencies all stand to benefit when we maximize our spectrum use. This requires a comprehensive approach that strikes the right balance of licensed, unlicensed, and shared spectrum.

We need a bipartisan solution that not only restores auction authority but also promotes a healthy spectrum pipeline and ensures our federal government speaks with one voice on spectrum policy. And we need to be forward-looking by promoting technologies that will improve spectrum sharing and efficiency.

Equally critical is our obligation to be responsible stewards of spectrum auction revenues. As a long-time advocate for the FCC’s Rip and Replace program, I’m proud of our work to use spectrum auction proceeds to remove unsecure Chinese equipment from our communications networks.

Spectrum is a public good. I’m dismayed to see proposals floated that would use auction proceeds to provide tax cuts for the wealthy through reconciliation. Rather, we need to work as a Subcommittee to use these funds to close the digital divide, protect national security, and support public safety communications.

This includes expanding access to lifesaving technologies, such as Next Generation 9-1-1, for faster and more accurate emergency responses. Last Congress, this Committee unanimously passed the Spectrum Auction Reauthorization Act, comprehensive spectrum legislation that would’ve accomplished these very goals.

Disappointingly, House Republican leadership never brought this bipartisan proposal to the floor for a vote.

This Congress, we must build on our good work. I hope my colleagues will continue our history of bipartisan cooperation on spectrum.

Lastly, I'd be remiss if I didn't highlight the important work of the National Spectrum Strategy. Even amidst an auction authority lapse, the Biden Administration answered my call for a unified spectrum plan by launching the first comprehensive U.S. spectrum strategy in six years. This strategy offers a roadmap for securing U.S. leadership in spectrum innovation and ensuring that the federal government speaks with one voice. We can't afford to throw that progress away and return to the disarray that preceded the National Spectrum Strategy.

The U.S. needs a unified spectrum position now more than ever to fight for our interests in international negotiations, and to rally other countries to our vision. If we fail to maintain our global leadership on spectrum, we create a vacuum that China will happily fill.

The stakes are high. It is time for all stakeholders to come to the table, and for Congress to pass comprehensive spectrum legislation that has substantial bipartisan buy-in. Clearly, there is a lot of work ahead of us. But I am hopeful. This Subcommittee has a proven track record of bipartisan cooperation that keeps America at the forefront of global innovation.

Now is not the time to throw that aside. We have a chance to continue our tradition of working across the aisle. I am committed to advancing solutions that secure economic growth, national security, and bipartisan funding priorities benefitting the American public.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing before us today, and I look forward to the discussion.

With that, I yield back the remainder of my time.