Opening Statement for Chairman Richard Hudson
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
"Legislative Hearing on Protecting Communications Networks and Improving Connectivity"
Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at 1:30 PM

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's hearing. We are here to consider several bills that address important issues facing our nation's communications ecosystem. These range from securing our networks from foreign threats and robocalls, to improving how we connect our rural constituents.

We all know the frustration of receiving unwanted robocalls. Americans received an estimated 4.3 billion robocalls last month alone. Although some of these calls are legal—calls that the recipient has consented to receiving, such as from a school or pharmacy—illegal robocalls continue to be a problem. In fact, fraud perpetuated against Americans by illegal robocalls cost an average of $25 billion annually, primarily affecting those who cannot afford such losses. Additionally, fraudulent robocalls make us distrustful of legitimate callers, causing us to ignore calls from unknown numbers and often miss important calls.

Congress has taken steps to address this problem. In 2019, we enacted the Pallone-Thune TRACED Act. This law took important steps to reduce illegal robocalls by requiring providers to implement call authentication, increased fines for intentional violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, authorized traceback efforts, and established a federal interagency working group to combat illegal robocalls. The FCC has also taken important steps to reduce illegal robocalls, both in implementing the TRACED Act and by working to block these calls from reaching our networks in the first place.

Unfortunately, however, more still needs to be done. Bad actors continue to develop new ways to enter our networks. And many of these culprits are based abroad, making them hard to track down. One of the bills we are considering today will improve our efforts to identify and catch these foreign bad actors and make it harder for their calls to enter our networks. These are meaningful steps.

I want to make clear that I am well aware of the difficulties that Congress, and the Federal government faces when trying to address this problem. Fraudsters do not follow the law, and we must be mindful of

imposing new requirements that will only burden legitimate callers while doing nothing to reduce the illegal calls that harm us.

We are also considering legislation to improve our efforts to connect our unserved and underserved rural constituents. Closing the digital divide has long been a priority for Congress, but our efforts to accomplish this goal has created a web of overlapping and duplicative programs. In 2022, the Government Accountability Office found that the federal government runs over 130 broadband programs across 15 different agencies. This fragmented approach has led to overbuilding and waste, not to mention confusion caused by conflicting requirements and obligations. GAO has recommended a government-wide strategy to better coordinate and align these programs, and I am pleased we are considering legislation to do that.

One helpful development in our efforts to deploy broadband is the FCC's broadband map. Although not perfect, this map has significantly improved our ability to identify who has broadband and who does not. We can improve this map, and today we are considering a bill that will help us identify agricultural areas so we can ensure farmers have the

connectivity they need for things like precision agriculture and other modern technologies.

I know full well the immense importance of connecting unserved Americans. I am a proud member of the bipartisan, bicameral Universal Service Fund Working Group, and I am continuing to work with the group on reforms to ensure the USF is sustainable for future generations. The USF is an important tool in our efforts to ensure universal connectivity, and I hope we can reach an agreement soon.

As we continue to deploy and upgrade communications infrastructure nationwide, we need the most advanced technology to ensure they are efficient, resilient, and secure. To accomplish this, we can turn to our favorite buzzword: artificial intelligence (AI). At a time when threats to our networks are at an all-time high, AI is a crucial tool to fight fire with fire and ensure one of our most critical systems is protected. Although AI is already deployed throughout our networks in certain capacities, we can always benefit from a greater understanding of how it can be implemented to maximize security.

We have a lot to talk about today. Thank you to our witnesses for being here. I look forward to the discussion.

I now yield five minutes to my colleague, Ranking Member Matsui, for her opening statement.