

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection  
“Oversight of the Federal Trade Commission**

**July 18, 2018**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Good morning. Today we welcome five distinguished public servants from the Federal Trade Commission. Chairman Simons and fellow commissioners, welcome to the Energy and Commerce Committee. We are so pleased to have a fully-constituted FTC in place, and we look forward to working with each of you.

While our economy is the driver of so much growth and opportunity for Americans, there are still, unfortunately, bad actors. The FTC is one of the top cops on the beat. It is charged with a dual mission of competition and consumer protection across large segments of the U.S. economy and this Committee’s jurisdiction. We need the FTC to follow its statutory authority to protect consumers from unfair, deceptive, and anti-competitive practices, both online and off.

Recent data security incidents involving Facebook, Equifax, Uber, and other companies continue to raise concerns about the various aspects of protecting consumers in a data-driven economy.

I understand the Commission does not, for good reason, comment on open investigations, but I would emphasize that data security incidents involving sensitive personal and financial information are a significant threat to U.S. consumers and businesses and we are laser focused on these issues at the committee.

The revelations surrounding Facebook and Cambridge Analytica have brought the issue of privacy of consumers’ data and information in the age of pervasive social media to the forefront. Particularly with Facebook being under a

consent order with the FTC, I will be closely evaluating the tools used by the FTC in that case as the matter moves forward.

Two weeks ago, we asked Apple CEO Tim Cook and Alphabet CEO Larry Page to explain how their companies use audio recording data as well as location information collected on iPhone and Android smartphones.

And, following reports that location data aggregators obtained location data from U.S. wireless carriers, in turn selling it to other firms, this morning we will be sending letters to LocationSmart, Securus, and 3CInteractive Corporation to probe their data handling and use practices.

We have pursued, and will continue to pursue, important oversight work of these issues. And we'll explore the question of whether there are improvements in the current privacy regulations that would increase consumer understanding of how data flows support the global economy.

We do not want to unduly saddle companies with unnecessary regulations or impose compliance burdens that will not result in any meaningful impact for consumers, but we will ensure companies are being responsible and that they do not misuse consumer data.

This is the overarching reason I support the Federal Communications Commission's *Restoring Internet Freedom Order*, which reaffirms the FTC's authority over both ISPs and tech companies alike. This authority is critical for enforcing data privacy practices, promoting a free and open internet, and protecting consumers from anticompetitive behaviors across the digital ecosystem.

As we consider these issues, I reiterate my invitation to tech CEOs to come here to D.C., engage with Congress, and talk directly to the committee and the public about their practices.

Our goal is to work with all stakeholders on how best to incentivize data security and help protect personal and financial data.

I am encouraged to have you all here today because I know you each understand the importance of these issues and the roll of the FTC in protecting consumers.

Thank you for being with us this morning and I look forward to working with you moving forward and to our important discussion today.