

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement

of

Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce Chair Jan Schakowsky

***“Oversight of the Federal Trade Commission: Strengthening Protections for Americans’
Privacy and Data Security”***

Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Good morning and thank you to the Federal Trade Commission for being here with us this morning. The title of today’s hearing references privacy, but the FTC does much more than privacy, and I expect Members to engage on any number of subjects within the FTC’s jurisdiction as part of our oversight an independent agency created by Congress to protect the American people.

Recent media reports have focused on FTC’s potentially record-breaking fine of Facebook, the fact of the matter is that the public information known about that case underscores the need for comprehensive privacy legislation. I recognize that you cannot talk about pending investigations, but I and the public are watching closely.

And while I appreciate the Commission’s professionalism and steadfast commitment to protect consumers in this and other cases, the reality is that a large fine in a single case is not enough. The FTC should be pursuing multiple investigations both large and small. Moreover, the FTC lacks the tools it needs to adequately fulfill its mission in the 21st century consumer landscape. The FTC needs increased funding and rulemaking authority at minimum to restore consumer confidence in today’s digital and brick and mortar marketplaces.

And we see this bear out in public opinion. According to a recent survey, 67 percent of American adults want the government to act to protect them.

My colleagues on both sides of the dais have heard me say that this subcommittee is America’s legislative helpline. We hear complaints about unsafe children’s toys, dangerous vehicle manufacturing designs, and pyramid schemes targeting society’s most vulnerable. But everywhere I go these days, people ask me about privacy. The American people are looking to us for meaningful action.

But the FTC’s mission extends far beyond privacy; at the core of its mission is consumer protection in all corners of the American economy. And while we have seen some positive and even at times surprising results from the Commission as currently constituted, we have also seen some decisions that don’t inspire confidence. In particular, I was very disappointed to see the

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Commission, on a party-line vote, approve non-monetary penalties for companies that had been fraudulently promoting their products as “Made In America.”

I welcome the Commission today to learn how we can assist them in fulfilling their mission. Given the breadth of their mission, I expect several subjects to come up, and I am confident our esteemed Commissioners will be up to the task.

I yield the balance of my time to Congressman Lujan.

[Rep. Lujan gives opening.]

I now yield to Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rogers for five minutes.

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