

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee On Consumer Protection and Commerce
“Reauthorizing Brand USA and Safe Web”
October 29, 2019**

“As Prepared for Delivery”

Good afternoon, and welcome to our witnesses. I am very pleased that the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee is moving these initiatives forward today.

While the Travel Promotion Act’s funding authorization of Brand USA, as well as the U.S. SAFE WEB Act, do not expire until next year, I believe we are all familiar with the present challenges of successfully moving legislative priorities through both chambers in a timely fashion. This subcommittee can do great things for consumers, and I want to be optimistic that we can move these items as well as other priorities on autonomous vehicles and privacy also in a bipartisan manner soon.

My friend Ms. Rodgers and myself will surely debate who has the better wineries in our neighboring states, but maybe we can agree a good way to solve the argument is if travelers from abroad come find out for themselves. The Bureau of Economic Analysis also reinforces our assessment of such benefits by reporting that foreign visitors account for a disproportionate amount of US travel and tourism spending.

For those that might criticize the BRAND USA program they should know it does not cost taxpayers one dime, so please direct your travelers out our way. I'd like to make them aware of not just our wineries and breweries, but also beautiful Crater Lake, the Painted Hills, the Pendleton Round-up and our countless mountains, rivers and forests.

I'm sure we all have similar stories, *although certainly not as great of examples as I do*, from our districts. That represents the true benefits of the BRAND USA program, which is having travelers to our largest gateway cities gain awareness of all the wonders the rest of our lands have to offer. I thank Mr. Welch and Mr. Bilirakis in sponsoring this important extension. I'd also like to ask for unanimous consent that an op-ed by Jason Brandt, CEO of the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, that appeared in the Hood River News be included in the record on the benefits of the program.

Let me segue to another important element in our international relationships. Since the committee first created the SAFEWEB Act, and our former colleague Mary Bono Mack and our current colleague Mr. Butterfield extended the program in 2012, it has been a valuable tool for the Federal Trade Commission to cooperate with foreign enforcement agencies. I appreciate that Ms. Rodgers is leading this effort on the

extension, along with Ms. Kelly. The way this program has served as such an important element of cooperation in dealing with online fraud and deception perhaps serves as a prelude to us doing another data privacy and protection bill that establishes strong uniform standards and protections – *perhaps we can do that for the next hearing?*

The SAFEWEB program also clearly reaffirms the authority the FTC has. That fact was reflected in our hearing with the agency earlier this year, which is that they know how to take on tough problems. As we have certainly learned in our efforts to fight robocalls this past year, a lot of harmful traffic we are dealing with is originating from beyond our borders, so we must act so we are not further inundated with spam and spyware meant to mislead us and even rob us.

With that, I'd like to yield my remaining time to Mr. Bilirakis to relay *opposing views* on the need to visit the East Coast of our country.

Thank you.