

**Opening Statement of Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**As Prepared for Delivery**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce**  
**Hearing titled “Preserving Americans’ Access to AM Radio”**  
**April 30, 2024**

Good morning and thank you Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the witnesses being here to provide their perspectives on the important legislation being discussed to preserve the American people’s access to A.M. radio.

This committee is at the forefront of advancing legislation that will strengthen American leadership in cutting-edge technologies.

At the same time, as we make the transition to these new technologies, it is vital that we’re mindful of unintended consequences and how these kinds of transitions can impact our communities.

Communities across the country are now beginning to feel the impact of some automakers deciding to permanently remove A.M. radio from new vehicle models.

At a hearing last year, this Committee discussed how important access to AM radio continues to be for many of our constituents.

For the people of Eastern Washington, it's how they hear the news in their communities, listen to sports, and receive critical information during emergencies.

In some parts of my district, people have limited access to F.M. radio and broadband, so A.M. radio is the only source of information.

Eastern Washington is far from unique when it comes to our reliance on A.M. radio.

Many members of this committee have constituents who find themselves in similar situations.

That’s why it’s concerning that some auto manufacturers have taken steps to remove A.M. radios from new vehicle models while disregarding for the impact.

This decision would affect tens of millions of Americans—some estimates show that more than 45 million Americans tune into A.M. radio each month.

A.M. radio is unique - not only is it free to consumers but, in comparison to alternatives, it can be transmitted over long distances with relatively low power.

It also provides an existence for small broadcasters, especially religious and minority broadcasters, that are highly valued by many Americans, myself included. Removing AM radios from vehicles puts their future at risk.

I know some people are quick to dismiss this issue by saying there are plenty of outlets for such content.

But while people in some parts of the country have been able to take advantage of alternative options in vehicles for accessing AM radio...

... like streaming services or satellite radio, these options are still unavailable in many places.

We also know from our hearing last year that AM is especially resilient and dependable in emergencies.

It is a core piece of our National Public Warning System – a system used by national, state, and local authorities to communicate life-saving information.

Members up and down the dais, across both sides of the aisle, have had first-hand experiences dealing with natural disasters in their states...

... including wildfires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, even earthquakes.

And while other forms of communication have failed during these incidents, A.M. radio has often remained resilient, operational...

...and has been a calming voice in the storm when on the go.

Just this week, it was reported that, when tornadoes swept across the Midwest, many people were receiving critical emergency updates via AM radio in their cars.

We're at a moment where we as the representatives of the people are being forced to intervene on behalf of them, because their concerns continue to be ignored by corporations making consumer vehicles.

I do not consider a mandate on manufacturers to continue including AM radio in vehicles lightly.

But the reality is that automakers have been aware of these bipartisan, bicameral concerns for a long time, and have yet to adequately address them with any private sector solutions.

It's disappointing, and ultimately, it's why we're here today having this discussion.

Whether they're tuning in for local news, agricultural and weather reports, information during an emergency, or to listen to their favorite talk radio personality, AM radio continues to be a trusted way for Americans to stay connected.

AM radio fosters a sense of local identity, connecting people through regional programming that reflects the unique perspectives and traditions of their communities.

It's closer to the people, telling the stories and sharing the perspectives that the national news doesn't cover and sometimes ignores, and it plays a crucial role in ensuring local government accountability.

I look forward to moving past this issue and getting back to working in a bi-partisan manner on other key issues for the future of vehicles in this country, like Autonomous vehicle legislation...

... so that America remains the leader in automotive innovation, not China.

I look forward to a productive discussion today.

As we discuss how to navigate our increasingly digital world, let us not forget the enduring and necessary role A.M. radio continues to play for people across the country.

Thank you, I yield back.