

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement

of

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Mike Doyle

Hearing on “*Discussion Draft: National Telecommunications and Information Administration Reauthorization Act of 2018*”

June 26, 2018

Thank you, Madam Chairman for holding this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us today.

I just want to start by saying that I’m concerned we don’t have someone from the agency we are planning to reauthorize here to testify. While I appreciate the time and effort the witnesses have taken out of their schedules to appear before us today, I’m deeply concerned that without participation from representatives of the agency itself we will not be fully able to understand the needs of the agency and how best this Subcommittee can help them in accomplishing their mission.

That issue aside, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration plays the critical role of advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues.

NTIA also manages federal spectrum usage and has been a key partner in freeing up more spectrum for commercial use, in doing so they have generated tens of billions in revenue for the federal government - a mission that I strongly believe we can do more to help them accomplish.

The Airwaves Act, a bipartisan-bicameral bill that I have sponsored with Mr. Lance, along with Senator’s Gardner and Hassan, furthers this mission by freeing up additional federal spectrum for commercial use and paves the way for our nation’s 5-G future. The Airwaves Act frees up a combination of licensed and unlicensed spectrum to meet our nation’s diverse spectrum needs.

The bill also sets up a new mechanism to help deploy broadband in rural and underserved communities -- by directing a portion of the spectrum auction revenue to wireless broadband deployment.

Madam Chairman, this legislation is supported by a number of our colleagues on this committee on both sides of the aisle, and I think it merits consideration by this Subcommittee.

I think this legislation could go a long way to accomplishing many of our shared goals.

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Going back to NTIA, the agency also administers grant programs to deploy broadband and other advanced technologies, including the very successful \$4 billion B-TOP broadband program.

The lessons learned from this program led to the creation of Broadband-USA, a one-stop shop that helps states, local governments, industry, and non-profits obtain the tools they need to expand broadband deployment and promote digital inclusion.

I'm happy to see that the reauthorization draft before us includes Mr. Tonko's bipartisan Access Broadband Act, which we voice voted out of this Subcommittee two weeks ago. This legislation puts into statute many of the things that NTIA is already doing through the Broadband USA program. I'm also happy to be a cosponsor of this legislation

It's a good start, but if we are going to help our rural and underserved communities address their broadband needs, we need to put our money where our mouth is and dedicate more dollars to solving this problem - particularly if we ever want to get people connected in rural and tribal communities as well as in Puerto Rico and other areas suffering from storm related damage and outages.

Ranking Member Pallone's Lift America Act sets out 40 billion dollars in funds to help address our nation's broadband shortfalls. This is the kind of commitment we need if we want to address these problems. If we continue to just sit here, these problems aren't going to solve themselves.

The draft reauthorization also directs NTIA to continue working on the National Broadband Map, another Recovery Act program that like B-TOP has run out of money. I agree with the majority that having accurate broadband maps is important both for the government and for consumers and communities. We can't solve a problem that we don't know the scale of. Looking at the mapping debacle in the FCC's Mobility Fund 2 proceeding demonstrates the need for better data.

The NTIA also represents and advocates on behalf of the United States internationally on matters of internet governance and telecommunications policy.

In this time of fractured alliances and tumultuous trade policy, a globally unified free and open internet is more important than ever. NTIA, as our representative to a number of these global internet governance organizations, needs to advance that message, through what seems to be a great deal of noise from our government.

NTIA also does critical spectrum research at the lab in Colorado, which we need to do more to support. They have also been a critical partner in housing and launching First-NET, our nation's public safety broadband network, which, I'm happy to note, every state has opted into.

They also have done good work developing policies on a range of complex technical subjects including: privacy, cybersecurity, and the digital economy.

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Madam Chairman, I support this agency, and I support giving this agency more resources to accomplish its many missions. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and working with you on this legislation.

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