

**Opening Statement of Chairman Marsha Blackburn  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
“RAY BAUM’S Act: A Bipartisan Foundation for Bridging the  
Digital Divide.”  
December 6, 2018**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning and welcome to our last hearing of the Congress. Over the last two years, it has been my pleasure to work with all of you on the Subcommittee on wide-ranging, important legislation. Though we occasionally have our disagreements, we have accomplished a lot for the American people this Congress. Nothing demonstrates this more than RAY BAUM’S Act, which was jam-packed with this year’s top communications priorities, as well as many other bills many of you have worked on over the last several years. And it came through concession and compromise from everyone around the table, both here and in the Senate—so I want to thank everyone who was part of that process.

RAY BAUM’S Act is one of the most comprehensive telecommunications laws in two decades. Prior to RAY BAUM’S Act, the FCC hadn’t been reauthorized since 1990— When *Home Alone* first debuted and Garth Brooks’ “Friends in Low Places” was top 5 in the country charts. By reauthorizing the Commission, we—as authorizers on this Committee—gave direction to the agency, reaffirmed the important

missions we've delegated to them, and most importantly gave them the necessary tools to succeed.

We see this in setting up new funds to ensure the broadcast incentive auction stays on track to be completed in 39 months.

We see this in the new rules that allow spectrum auction bidders to deposit their upfront payments directly with the Treasury to ensure that more airwaves, both in the current pipeline and on the horizon, are brought to market.

And we see this with our bipartisan commitment to focus the Commission on finding ways to encourage restoration and resiliency of communications networks after disasters.

At the first hearing of 2018, we gathered to discuss all of the legislation addressing broadband infrastructure that had been introduced by every member of the Subcommittee. Provisions from several of these were ultimately incorporated into RAY BAUM'S Act. Also included in RAY BAUM'S Act were provisions from bills that long have enjoyed bipartisan support, but never could get enacted into law, like Mr. Scalise's FCC Consolidated Reporting Act and the Anti-Spoofing Act championed by Mr. Lance and Mr. Barton on this Committee.

But despite these breakthroughs, there is still more work to be done— and with the new year comes a new opportunity to bring more ideas to the table. I'm encouraged by the bipartisan foundation set by RAY BAUM's Act, and I'm confident that this Subcommittee will build on its success in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress and keep working on the many areas of common interest. Americans deserve no less.

I would like to thank our witnesses for being here, but before I yield to Mr. Doyle, I'd like to recognize some of the people who have made our committee so successful during this Congress. First, I would like to thank my wonderful committee staff. They stuck together through a tough year, and made great strides in achieving our committee's priorities. I would also like to acknowledge my good friend Leonard Lance, who lead on a number of bills that moved through this committee; my fellow Senator-elect Kevin Cramer; Ryan Costello; and of course Mimi Walters, who played a significant role for this committee's jurisdiction with enactment of the FOSTA-SESTA legislation as another tool to fight human sex trafficking – I can assure you that commitment will carry on as we continue to review all aspects of the 1996 Telecom Act and other communications laws next Congress. And with that I will yield to the ranking member of the Subcommittee, Mr. Doyle.