

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Legislating to Stop the Onslaught of Annoying Robocalls”
April 30, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

Let me welcome the witnesses to the panel today. All of you here care deeply about the proposals before us, and all are working very hard to address this scourge – that has grown from an annoyance to a sincere peril – in your respective areas.

In the 20 townhalls I’ve held across my district, it seemed like inevitably someone would ask “can’t something be done about robocalls?” I share their frustration and remain committed to working with the Chairman to address these calls with action from Congress.

You would be hard pressed to find a technology that’s more personal than a telephone. Whether it’s the cell phone in your pocket, or for some, a landline at home, voice communications on these devices is still an important way in which we connect to one another. Yet that personal connection is being violated by bad actors using technology to hide their tracks. They should be treated and prosecuted for what they are, criminals. These criminal parties have done significant harm to Americans both personally and professionally.

First, as we seek a successful effort on this legislation, I believe it is important to state that we make a clear distinction in targeting those parties that have malicious intent as opposed to those who do not. Our clearest and quickest path for enacting law is to go after those that have malicious intent. To go beyond that, we will undermine services that many Americans depend upon every day.

Second, I want to put an emphasis on thanking the Chairman for the process we are vetting these bills under today. By putting our teams together, it is a welcome return to the process we operated under with our friends last Congress that led to many bipartisan successes, one of which specifically sought to address malicious spoofing. As part of RAY BAUM's Act last Congress we provided the FCC more authority to go after bad actors who utilize calls and texts. A bipartisan process matters. We all benefit from hearing and debating each other's ideas. Such vetting gives us the opportunity to get to the heart of the problem, and not error on the side of cutting off legitimate use of these technologies, such as protecting the anonymity of a shelter assisting at-risk individuals, alerting you to a fraudulent use of your credit card, or providing you the simple convenience of interacting with your ride-share service.

Almost a year ago to the day we held a hearing on combatting illegal and fraudulent robocalls and spoofing. We shared several ideas on how industry can do its part to address this scourge, and how consumers should make use of the solutions. We will soon have the FCC before the committee, and we will gain by their technical insight before we mark-up. I'm pleased that the bills we review today seek to lock in those objectives. As we highlighted then, we owe it to our constituents to present all options available to them.

As we work to make this a bipartisan success, and I know it can be under the Chairman's leadership, I do not want to build a false expectation that these bills will end the problem. Subcommittee members here know better than many how communications and technologies are constantly evolving. The bad actors' tricks evolved beyond our Do Not Call registry and will likely figure out an avenue beyond our next effort. However, the more friction we create against these criminals, and the more focused public-private partnerships amongst industry, consumer groups and government are in rooting out the problems, we can make great strides in regaining American's confidence in their communications.

Lastly, while engagement of law enforcement is beyond the purview of this committee, that is an avenue worth pursuing as well and I look

forward to the bills being considered today being further strengthened by a dialogue with our friends in the Senate who have also sought to engage the powers of the Attorney General.

Thank you again for my colleagues and the witness panel, and I look forward to another bipartisan bicameral success originating from this Committee.