Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
"Legislating to Secure America's Wireless Future"
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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome our witnesses to this hearing. Your insight will be another important input in the process we began last Congress to secure our communications networks.

Our nation's telecommunications infrastructure represents the lifeblood of preserving a free and open society, and any effort to disrupt that infrastructure should be taken as an effort to undermine our liberties.

The bills before us today deliver on a commitment we began last Congress to have a bipartisan process to mitigate these threats, and secure this sector going forward. Moreover, I know Chairman Pallone and I agree that the Energy and Commerce Committee is singularly able to speak to these topics in the Congress. And with both sides working together with stakeholders ranging from industry to civil society we can do so successfully.

Everyone in this room can agree on the importance of securing our nation's communication's networks from vulnerable equipment. In fact,

we heard testimony over two years ago on the vulnerabilities that may exist in our networks. We have also heard of the impact on rural providers who may be more disproportionately impacted by calls to replace existing equipment as they seek to stay in their budgets, not to mention within Federal programs' purchasing guidance to deploy the most effective products. Unfortunately, our adversaries have no reservations about subsidizing their pet companies, and thus become attractive options for the budget sensitive providers.

I've seen how small broadband providers in my own state are trying to make a go of deploying broadband networks and stretching limited funds to ensure they connect the most constituents in some of the hardest to reach places. Many of these providers don't have an army of consultants with the necessary security clearances to understand what vulnerabilities exist and how to inform their purchasing decisions. For those who receive Federal support to build out broadband networks in unserved areas—like many of the providers in my district—we cannot set them up for failure by requiring them to select the lowest cost equipment option, only then for Uncle Sam to later say, "well, not *that* lowest cost equipment."

H.R. 4461, the *Network Security Information Sharing Act*, would facilitate exactly the type of information sharing needed by rural

providers that have vulnerable equipment in their networks. This was the centerpiece of our bipartisan discussions last Congress, and I'm pleased to see this concept at today's hearing.

H.R. 4459, the *Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act*, which I am an original cosponsor of, would further address this problem by setting up a reimbursement program to "rip and replace" vulnerable equipment from those networks. While we still have some details to work out on the way to markup, the program is modeled on the FCC's so-far-successful broadcast incentive repack reimbursement program.

We need to get this right; it is critical to our national security but also our competitiveness as we start rolling out new technologies.

This brings me to another topic that I raised at our July spectrum hearing – of how Russia is seeking to influence our public discourse on the subject of deployment of next generation networks. I know Congresswoman Eshoo and Congresswoman DeGette also shared my concern in this regard. As we continue our work to close the digital divide and lead the race to 5G, we must be prepared to prevent threats from those seeking to diminish America's standing in the world. Just this past week my staff saw this card posted to a bulletin board by the Rayburn cafeteria – details are pretty scant who is behind this campaign

that just lists a litany of issues why 5G is supposedly bad. It collects numerous stories around the country on things wrong with 5G -- ironically one of the stories is about community health fears stopping a 5G rollout in Australia while at the same time noting that the World Health Organization stated there should not be any health risks from 5G, and that Cornell University research showed 5G networks to be safer than previous networks -- So, we must be vigilant about efforts to influence our thinking in this space and I hope the committee will look ahead at other efforts are being pursued to stifle our Internet architecture.

I look forward to hearing about the other bills put forward by our members today as other thoughtful approaches to these challenges. Thank you again for holding this hearing today.