

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications & Technology Ranking Member Doris Matsui
Hearing on “Oversight and Reauthorization of the National Telecommunications and
Information Administration”

May 23, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Latta. This hearing comes at an important time for NTIA and the future of connectivity.

The decisions we make over the coming months will have lasting impacts both domestically and abroad. I appreciate NTIA Administrator Davidson for coming here to discuss them with this Subcommittee.

NTIA is responsible by law for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues. But technology is no longer its own issue. It underpins every sector of the economy and informs everything we do.

NTIA’s statutory role speaking on behalf of the federal government on telecommunications and information issues has never been more important. As I’ve said many times, it is imperative that the entire executive branch acknowledge and support that responsibility.

Unfortunately, we’ve all seen what happens when these statutory roles breakdown. We’re having this hearing more than two months into a protracted lapse in the FCC’s auction authority.

It’s hard to overstate the economic and national security implications of that lapse. Ensuring the federal government speaks with one voice on spectrum issues is foundational to America’s continued global leadership.

Look no further than the upcoming CITELECOM and World Radio Conferences.

There’s vital work to encourage global adoption of unlicensed spectrum in the 6 gigahertz band and harmonizing the three-dot-three to three-dot-four gigahertz bands for mobile telecommunications. And looking beyond that, we all know NTIA will be the tip of the spear for keeping our spectrum pipeline strong.

That means ensuring the federal government is a partner, not an obstacle, in making new spectrum available for commercial use.

I have two bills on the agenda today that I’m confident will help.

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First, is my Spectrum Relocation Enhancement Act. This bill would make needed updates to the Spectrum Relocation Fund. This fund compensates federal agencies to clear spectrum for commercial use. But for many agencies the costs outweigh the benefits. My bill would make needed updates to better incentivize agencies to clear spectrum by allowing them to upgrade their technology consistent with their operational needs.

My other bill, the Spectrum Coexistence Act would require NTIA to conduct a review of federal receiver technology to support more intensive use of limited spectrum.

The FCC recently released a set of receiver principles for commercial equipment, and I think it's important we do the same for federal tech. As new spectrum gets harder and harder to find, updating the S-R-F and scrutinizing federal technology will help ensure that the federal government is playing its part.

I'm also excited to have an opportunity to hear from Administrator Davidson on the status of BEAD implementation. Between the bipartisan infrastructure law and the CHIPS and Science Act, NTIA will be implementing several programs with massive potential. With the June deadline for state BEAD funding allocations coming up, it is vital that we keep moving forward despite misguided calls for delay.

I know unserved constituents in my district are desperate for this funding to get shovels in the ground and connectivity to their homes. This bipartisan program can and should be a landmark achievement for all of us on this Subcommittee and I look forward to supporting its timely rollout.

NTIA is also in the process of implementing the funding I helped secure in the CHIPS and Science Act to support the maturation of the Open RAN market.

NTIA recently released the first phase NOFO to advance testing and evaluation of open and interoperable networks. We're expecting the first tranche of funding in August, and I look forward to seeing the funding being applied quickly.

So clearly there's much to discuss today. I appreciate Administrator Davidson appearing before us and with that, I yield back the balance of my time.