

Opening Statement Republican Leader Greg Walden Consumer Protection and Commerce

Subcommittee Markup “H.R. 3851, the "Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2019" and H.R. 4779, to extend the US SAFEWEB Act of 2006, and for other purposes”

November 14, 2019

As Prepared for Delivery

Good afternoon, I am excited about the bills the committee is moving forward in a bipartisan way today.

When I’ve had the opportunity to travel overseas, from the vantage point of an American traveling abroad it’s easy to grasp the first-hand benefit of both pieces of legislation we will consider today.

The internet has not only brought us more in contact through the various social media platforms, but also through the tech that connects us. We now all carry smartphones that have wi-fi capabilities built-in, and hotels, airports and other public venues provide connectivity over wi-fi access points. Gone are the days of the costly overseas long-distance calls when various apps can now serve as the substitute.

This great benefit also has its own drawbacks. As we become more connected in this digital age, we also become more susceptible to malicious cyber spam, scams and other attacks from bad actors. Fortunately, we have programs like the SAFE WEB Act that gives the Federal Trade Commission the ability to cooperate with authorities around the globe to counter these kinds of efforts directed at Americans.

As discussed at the legislative hearing a couple weeks ago, that has been an important tool for the FTC to do its international work. Given the importance of this program, I am happy to see this committee work to extend it on a bipartisan basis, and I appreciate the leadership by Ms. Rodgers, along with Ms. Kelly in bringing it forward today and urge my colleagues to support this measure.

As such a program like SAFE WEB makes our experience overseas much more enjoyable, we certainly want to make sure foreigners want to visit the United States as well. Walking through an international airport you will be bombarded by all sorts of enticing advertising of where to visit around the globe. Tourism is an important venue of opportunity and source of revenue that is of great importance to communities across our country and the globe. And I can assure you other countries aren’t shy about trying to compete for it.

That’s where Brand USA comes in. Thanks to this program, our nation is better able to compete with all those other attractive international opportunities. At our last hearing, we had a lively debate on who had the best locations of interest. I might be biased, but I think some of the best spots to visit are in Oregon’s Second District. Brand USA has helped Travel Oregon bring folks

to experience some of our state's great wonders – places like Crater Lake, the Painted Hills, and the Wallowas. Tourism brings a great source of revenue to rural communities in my district and across the country and it is important to ensure that this continues.

I believe that kind of comity and promotion brings us closer together here and abroad. The great news is that this program comes at no expense to our taxpayers but provides a great benefit to the American economy. It would certainly be unfortunate if this program isn't reauthorized as it truly helps to promote our places of interest that don't have the resources to mount international advertising campaigns to attract visitors.

I thank Mr. Welch and Mr. Bilirakis in sponsoring this important extension and urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Thank you.