

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Legislative Hearing to Protect Consumers and Strengthen the Economy”

May 26, 2022

Today, we will discuss several bipartisan bills that would strengthen our economy and protect both consumers and horses.

We’re going to discuss two bills that will help strengthen our economy by boosting the travel and tourism industry, an industry desperately trying to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Visit America Act and the Travel and Tourism Act both call on the Department of Commerce to develop and implement a pandemic recovery strategy for the travel and tourism industry.

We will also examine legislation to further enhance our nation’s manufacturing sector. Today, there is no centralized repository of information about the various federal programs supporting manufacturing. The Manufacturing.gov Act changes that by requiring the Department of Commerce to ensure that the manufacturing.gov website serves as the primary hub for information relating to federal manufacturing programs.

We will also consider legislation that will protect consumers. We will discuss Reese’s Law, a bill named after Reese Hamsmith, an 18-month-old baby who tragically died after ingesting a button cell battery. These batteries are very small – the size of a button – and are found in common household electronics like television remotes, key fobs, and meat thermometers. They have been shown to cause serious injury and death to children who swallow them.

Reese’s Law directs the Consumer Product Safety Commission to establish mandatory safety standards to protect children from ingesting button cell batteries. We are so grateful that Reese’s mother, Trista, is here today to share her story. Her advocacy has no doubt saved lives and this bill will save more.

We will also examine legislation to address the far too common practice of charging women higher prices than men for identical products and services. This so-called “pink tax” is simply not fair, and it must stop. The bipartisan Pink Tax Repeal Act would do just that. It prohibits the selling of substantially similar consumer products and services at different prices based on gender. The legislation also puts violators on the hook for civil penalties.

The bipartisan Informing Consumers About Smart Devices Act would require that manufacturers of devices connected to the internet that have cameras or microphones inform consumers that those cameras or microphones are part of the device. No one should be surprised

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to learn if their electronic device has the ability to record them. The legislation also gives the Federal Trade Commission the authority to punish violators.

We will also consider the Securing And Enabling Commerce Using Remote and Electronic Notarization Act, which establishes nationwide standards and technical requirements for remote online notarization. This legislation will transition notarization to the 21st century without sacrificing security, making the process more convenient and safer for the American public.

Finally, we will discuss two bills that would end horrendous practices and intolerable abuses suffered by horses. Since 2015, hundreds of thousands of horses have been exported from the United States to Canada and Mexico for slaughter for human consumption. And despite a national ban, the practice of soring – applying an irritating or blistering agent to a limb of a horse to accentuate the horse’s gait – continues. The SAFE Act and the PAST Act will address unfortunate gaps in our animal welfare laws that have left these innocent animals far too vulnerable.

I look forward to the discussion on these bills today.