

**TESTIMONY OF
CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

“OVERSIGHT OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION”

BEFORE THE

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

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Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify. I am grateful for the opportunity to join with my Commission colleagues today and provide an update on the FCC’s work over the last year. I look forward to sharing with you the priorities we have been advancing at the FCC since January.

While this is not my first time testifying before the Commerce Committee, it is my first time appearing before you as Chairman, and there are a number of new members on the Committee since the last FCC oversight hearing in 2020. So I wanted to begin with a brief introduction.

I first joined the FCC as a staffer in 2012 over a dozen years ago. In the time since, I have had the privilege of serving in a number of different roles at the agency. I started out as an attorney in the FCC’s Office of General Counsel. I then worked as a legal advisor for a Commissioner. Following that, I served as the General Counsel of the FCC before President Trump nominated me to serve as a Commissioner in 2017. Having been confirmed by the Senate three times, I am very grateful to President Trump for his decision to designate me as Chairman of the FCC earlier this year.

Working alongside my Commission colleagues here today and leading the talented group of public servants at the agency is the honor of a lifetime. I am proud of the work the agency’s dedicated staff have been getting done for the American people. And I am especially grateful for their commitment to public service through the recent government shutdown. It is great to have everyone back in the building again.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the important work that this Committee has accomplished this Congress. Thanks to Chairman Cruz, and many of his fellow Committee Members, the FCC’s spectrum auction authority has now been restored through President Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill. When the FCC’s auction authority lapsed for the first time ever back in 2023, it put America’s global leadership and our connectivity goals at serious risk. I am glad we are correcting course now. I also want to applaud Chairman Cruz and Senator Markey for their leadership on the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act. This legislation will help keep AM

radio—a linchpin of our emergency response system—in place and ensure that Americans can continue to access local news, information, and entertainment programming.

Following President Trump’s strong leadership, the FCC has moved quickly to execute on an ambitious set of reforms. We are advancing a Build America Agenda—a concrete plan to unleash high-speed infrastructure builds, drive down prices for consumers, and restore U.S. leadership in wireless. We are reinvigorating the agency’s consumer protection work, including its efforts to crack down on illegal robocalls. We are empowering broadcasters to meet their public interest obligations. We are strengthening America’s national security and advancing public safety. We are undertaking the largest deregulatory effort in the agency’s history. And we are eliminating waste while improving efficiency and modernizing agency operations.

I detailed much of this agenda for the first time on a visit earlier this year to a tower construction company’s training center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. While Sioux Falls might not be everyone’s pick for rolling out a policy agenda for a federal agency headquartered in Washington, D.C., I could not think of a more appropriate setting. For one, the communities spread across South Dakota are a great reminder of the types of places we have to keep in mind as we develop connectivity policies back here in Washington. For another, I first visited that facility over seven years earlier—it was the first place that I ever put on a harness and hardhat in this job and climbed a tower. So it was a good reminder of the work ahead for America’s broadband builders, and why the FCC’s agenda should focus on making their jobs a little bit easier.

As I detailed in those remarks, the FCC’s Build America Agenda focuses on a number of core priorities. I would like to provide the Committee with an overview of those goals, and the work the FCC is undertaking to advance them and some of the agency’s other top agenda items.

Unleashing High-Speed Infrastructure Builds.

The FCC is working to unleash high-speed infrastructure builds in communities across the country. We are modernizing permitting rules and cutting red tape. This includes making it easier for providers to retire slow and old copper lines and replace them with the modern, high-speed ones that consumers want. We are accelerating and simplifying the process for extending new lines across existing utility poles. And we are pursuing a range of additional steps that can remove barriers to deployment and streamline regulatory approaches. These actions will free up billions of dollars in capital that can go to work closing the digital divide.

At the same time, we are ending the Biden-era regulatory overreaches that only made it harder to build high-speed infrastructure in this country. This year, for instance, the FCC reversed a Biden-era plan that would have slowed down infrastructure builds by subjecting tower builds to additional, needless, and onerous regulations. We also stopped a Biden-era proposal to regulate so-called “bulk billing” arrangements, which could have increased the price of Internet service for Americans living in apartments by as much as 50 percent. And at the very beginning of this year, a federal court invalidated the prior FCC’s plan to expand government control of the Internet through heavy-handed, Title II regulation.

Restoring America's Leadership in Wireless.

The FCC has also been working hard to free up airwaves and restore the country's leadership in wireless. This is key because opening up spectrum for more intensive use drives down prices for consumers, brings families across the digital divide, and strengthens competition. But at the beginning of this year, the FCC had a lot of work to do on this front. Our spectrum auction authority had lapsed two years earlier. And there was no pipeline of spectrum for the agency to auction.

Thanks to President Trump's leadership, we are turning things around—and fast. At my very first meeting as FCC Chairman, we started a proceeding to examine ideas for freeing up a large swath of spectrum in the Upper C-band. The White House then initiated a ten-week “spectrum sprint” to study options for lighting up hundreds of megahertz of spectrum. And President Trump leaned in—making it clear that advancing America's 5G and 6G leadership would be a top priority for the Administration.

Chairman Cruz and many members of this Committee then spearheaded the work to pass the spectrum provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill. Those provisions restored the FCC's auction authority and established a real spectrum pipeline—one with hard deadlines, clearing targets, and candidate bands.

For our part, the One Big Beautiful Bill requires the FCC to auction at least 100 megahertz of spectrum in the Upper C-band by July 2027 and at least 300 megahertz total by 2034. The FCC has been working hard to implement those provisions in coordination with other federal agencies and stakeholders. Indeed, just last month, the Commission voted on a proposal to auction up to 180 megahertz of spectrum in the Upper C-band—exceeding the 100 megahertz minimum set by Congress.

Of course, a lot of work remains ahead on the C-band. Success will require continued interagency coordination, especially with our federal partners at the FAA and NTIA. It also requires extensive cooperation and information sharing between the wireless and aviation sectors. We have been working well with all stakeholders, and I am pleased with the collaboration we've seen to date.

But our work to advance U.S. spectrum leadership is not limited to the Upper C-band or even spectrum auctions alone. In the secondary markets, we are now seeing large swaths of spectrum moving into the hands of competitors that can put it to productive use quickly. On this score, AT&T recently agreed to purchase 50 megahertz of spectrum. And SpaceX has agreed to acquire 60 megahertz more. If approved, the latter transaction could advance America's position as the world-leader in next-generation, direct-to-cell technology. These secondary market moves are already showing results. Indeed, just recently, one carrier announced that they have already built out spectrum they gained access to this year to over 23,000 cell sites in record time—boosting 5G speeds by up to 80 percent.

Boosting America's Space Economy.

President Trump has been clear that the Administration is ushering in a new Golden Age for space innovation in America. And President Trump's leadership could not come at a better time. Our nation is in the midst of what I refer to as a Space Race 2.0. This time around our main competitor is the government of China, which has its sights set on dominating in low-Earth orbit and up and down every orbital location.

To win this second Space Race, the U.S. is going to rely on American innovators. And I have had the chance to see these great businesses firsthand on visits outside the Beltway. Earlier this year, for instance, I visited Midland, Texas, with Chairman Cruz where we saw some of the nation's leading innovators building next-gen satellites in West Texas.

The FCC's efforts on this front are possible thanks to the Executive Order President Trump signed earlier this year to streamline regulations and foster a competitive commercial space industry. The FCC is following the White House's lead. We are looking to add rocket fuel to our space economy and give the private sector a predictable regulatory framework by focusing on four main principles: speed, simplicity, security, and satellite spectrum abundance. We are already clearing out application backlogs and standardizing procedures in furtherance of that agenda.

Strengthening America's Telecom Workers.

I have had the chance to climb towers, splice fiber, and string lines with some of the country's most talented and hardworking telecom crews. So it is important to me that the FCC do its part to strengthen the nation's telecom workforce. I am determined to ensure that our nation's tower and telecom crews are rewarded for their work. And they are poised to benefit greatly from President Trump's leadership and the agency's Build America Agenda.

We are already seeing good results. Over the last year, many communications providers have committed to a range of workforce reforms that will result in a more sustainable environment for America's tower and telecom crews. Providers are now adopting faster payment cycles and fairer pricing metrics. They are minimizing layers of subcontracting, which will allow for greater oversight of crews and stronger safety protections. And they are closing loopholes that allowed foreign, fly-by-night groups to swoop in and undercut U.S. crews. The FCC will continue to look out for American workers.

Reinvigorating the FCC's Consumer Protection Work.

The FCC has been working hard to reinvigorate and modernize our consumer protection work. Of course, the issue the FCC hears about the most through consumer complaints is illegal robocalls. And on this front, the FCC has started a new campaign to tackle illegal robocalls at every point in the call path. For years, the government's efforts in this area have been described as a game of whack-a-mole. When we address one type of scam, or fine a bad actor, another one pops up using a new workaround.

So we are now looking at every portion of the call lifecycle. We are focusing on prevention—stopping bad actors from ever originating calls in the first place. We are pushing carriers to block more illegal robocalls before they reach consumers. We are giving consumers better tools to distinguish legitimate calls from scams. We are looking to curb scam calls that originate outside of the United States by deterring the use of U.S. area codes for calls originating overseas. And we are stepping up enforcement to make sure every provider doing business in the U.S. takes proactive steps to mitigate robocalls. Indeed, on my watch, the FCC has now removed over 1,200 non-compliant voice service providers from the Robocall Mitigation Database, which functionally disconnects them from the U.S. phone network. The FCC will continue to crack down on shady providers using all of the tools at our disposal.

Our work on consumer protection matters also includes our efforts to help Americans access the right resources during a time of crisis. This year, for instance, we adopted rules requiring wireless providers to develop the capability to transmit georouting data when someone sends a text to 988. This means that someone reaching out for help during a crisis will get the localized help they need.

Empowering Local Broadcasters.

The FCC is working to empower local broadcasters to serve the public interest and meet the needs of their communities. As Congress, the Supreme Court, and the FCC have all made clear, broadcasters are different than every other distributor of media. Specifically, broadcasters are required by both the Communications Act and the terms of their FCC-issued licenses to operate in the public interest. This sets them apart from cable channels, podcasts, streaming services, social media, and countless other types of distributors that have no public interest obligation. The FCC's broadcast hoax rule, its news distortion policy, its political equal opportunity regulation, its prohibition on obscene, indecent, and profane content, its localism requirements—all of those and more apply uniquely to broadcasters. Congress has instructed the FCC to enforce public interest requirements on broadcasters. The FCC should do exactly that.

Television broadcasters have this public interest obligation because the government has given them the unique privilege of using a scarce national resource—the public airwaves—and in doing so has necessarily excluded others that might want to broadcast their own programming over that same spectrum. That is why they are required to serve, not just their own narrow interest, but the public interest, including the needs of their local communities.

To ensure that broadcasters can meet their public interest obligations, the FCC has taken a number of actions, including seeking public comment for the first time in more than 15 years on the relationship between the large, national programmers on the one hand and the many local broadcast television stations on the other. Comments in that proceeding suggest that many local broadcasters are concerned that the national programmers have amassed enormous power and influence in recent years and have made it more challenging for local broadcasters to fulfill their public interest obligations.

The FCC is going to continue its efforts to empower local broadcasters to meet their public interest obligations.

Promoting National Security and Advancing Public Safety.

The FCC has significantly ramped up its efforts this year to promote our country's national security and advance public safety. For one, at the beginning of my time as Chairman, I stood up a new Council on National Security within the FCC to leverage all of the agency's authorities, expertise, and relevant workstreams to counter the threats posed by foreign adversaries, including the government of China. This Council is already paying dividends. The FCC cracked down on what we call "Bad Labs"—labs that review and approve electronics for use in the United States, but are owned or controlled by foreign adversary governments. The Council on National Security also executed Operation Clean Carts, which worked with e-commerce platforms to take down millions of listings of devices on the FCC's Covered List or otherwise prohibited for sale in the United States.

And that's not all. In May, the FCC started the process of identifying foreign adversaries that hold licenses or authorizations in the communications sector, in line with the policy of Senator Fischer and Senator Lujan's FACT Act. In August, the FCC adopted new rules on undersea cable security, following President Trump's America First Investment Policy Memorandum. In those rules, we took action to unleash the build out of undersea cables to ensure the U.S. leads the world on AI infrastructure, as the President's AI Action Plan calls for, while mitigating threats to undersea cables from foreign adversaries. In October, the FCC closed two loopholes that provided no check on old models of covered equipment—potential spy gear—to be imported or sold, as well as allowed devices to be approved that contain covered equipment as module components. And most recently, in the wake of SALT Typhoon, the FCC has worked directly with carriers to ensure that they are adapting their cybersecurity practices and hardening their networks against future attacks, including by working with federal partners like the FBI, NSA, and CISA to receive technical assistance on networks, rapidly share information, and working together to strengthen cyber defenses.

Beyond threats from foreign adversaries, the FCC also continues to foster network resilience in the face of natural disasters. My first trip as Chairman of the FCC was to Western North Carolina where I visited several of Hurricane Helene's hardest-hit areas and met with emergency management and public safety officials, telecom crews, broadcasters, and other government representatives that worked to rebuild those communities. In July, we hosted a public roundtable focused on collaboration between communications service providers, electric utilities, and emergency management officials. Following the discussion, we published Cross-Sector Best Practices for Hurricane Season in September focused on disaster recovery, "blue sky" coordination efforts, and mutual cross-sector aid and assistance, building on the work of the Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative.

Earlier this year, the FCC also began the process of a ground-up re-examination of the national alert and warning systems, including the Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts. The underlying frameworks of these systems are 31 and 13 years old, respectively, so it is important to ensure the FCC is leveraging the latest technology to save lives.

The FCC has also worked to strengthen and modernize our Nation's public safety systems. In March, the FCC proposed requirements to improve location precision for 911 callers in multistory buildings. We also moved forward with a proposal that would make the transition from legacy 911 to NG911 effective and reliable without creating new vulnerabilities in critical public safety networks.

Streamlining Regulations and Modernizing Agency Operations.

Right now, the FCC is also undertaking the largest deregulatory initiative in the agency's history. At the beginning of my tenure as Chairman, I launched an effort titled "In Re: Delete, Delete, Delete." Since then, the FCC has been reviewing every rule, regulation, and guidance document for the purpose of eliminating unnecessary regulatory burdens, and we sought feedback from stakeholders to get their perspectives as well.

I am now pleased to report that to date the FCC has removed or teed up for removal 1,108 rules and regulations, 134,928 words, and 312 pages of the Code of Federal Regulations. The FCC has also worked to close out inactive dockets and has terminated a record 2,048 inactive proceedings. These initiatives further the Commission's goal of promoting good governance, increasing efficiency, and modernizing agency processes.

Improving efficiency at the FCC does not stop with examining the CFR and open FCC dockets. We are also working to be good stewards of the taxpayers' funds. In Fiscal Year 2025, we generated millions of dollars in savings by eliminating or modifying unnecessary contracts. We also brought agency staff back into the building to foster in-person collaboration to deliver on the FCC's mission.

As you can tell, the FCC and its hardworking staff have been moving fast to deliver great results for the American people this year. I thank them for their dedicated service. And I look forward to the important work ahead.

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In closing, I want to thank you again Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.