

Opening Statement of Chairman Rod Blum (R-IA)
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy, and Trade
Hearing: “Disconnected: Rural Broadband and the Business Case for Small Carriers”
March 6, 2017
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Thank you, Chairwoman Radewagen. I would also like to thank our witnesses for your willingness to speak with us today.

Today’s joint hearing focuses a topic that is particularly important to the many Iowa family farmers and rural community members I represent back in my home district. While rural broadband was touched upon at the last hearing I chaired in February, I thank the Chairwoman for the opportunity to take a deeper dive into the specific challenges facing rural broadband deployment in our conversation today.

It is easy to recognize the importance of seamless and robust internet and telecommunications service connecting rural America to the rest of the country. However, it is critically important that we fully understand *how to get to that point*, and how we can continue to nurture that growth.

Small, rural internet service providers shoulder a heavy burden deploying broadband across hundreds of miles of diverse and sparse terrain. The significant investment required to deploy, maintain, update, and continually service these high-cost, rural areas should not be taken lightly. It is imperative that we identify and help mitigate the difficulties identified by small, rural carriers in deploying broadband so we can begin to close the urban and rural digital divide.

The ability to deliver a high quality of life to rural Americans, spur job growth and job creation, improve access to education, health services, and innovation in the agritech sector are all dependent on the ability to transmit data and communicate information quickly, efficiently, and at low cost. Echoing the sentiment expressed by the Chairwoman, as we look ahead at plans to improve our nation’s infrastructure, we need to make sure that rural broadband is part of that discussion. The progress of our nation depends on it.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses to identify the challenges for small, rural carriers and potentially uncover solutions that Congress may consider to ensure that the mobile wireless marketplace is competitive and fair for all businesses.

Madam Chairwoman, I yield back the balance of my time.

