

**Opening Statement of Chairwoman Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen (AS)**  
**Subcommittee on Health and Technology**  
**Hearing: “Disconnected: Rural Broadband and the Business Case for Small Carriers”**  
**March 6, 2017**  
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Talofa, good morning. This hearing will come to order.

First, I'd like to thank our witnesses for taking the time to share their thoughts with us today. I look forward to your testimony. I'd also like to thank Chairman Blum for co-leading this important discussion.

Today's joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Health and Technology, and the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy, and Trade will focus on challenges facing small internet service providers deploying broadband to rural, high-cost areas. This hearing expands upon past conversations started in Committee and recently continued in a hearing led by Chairman Blum a few short weeks ago.

This topic is of particular significance to the people of American Samoa as our telecommunications and internet connectivity is severely lacking, especially in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Gita. As our world becomes increasingly dependent on a robust telecommunications service and wireless internet, the lack of it in places like American Samoa and rural America becomes even more glaring. These high-cost areas depend upon the industriousness and commitment to deploying robust, accessible broadband by small, rural, and regional internet service providers. However, challenges facing these carriers in obtaining adequate financing can impede forward progress, further exacerbating the disparities between urban and rural communities.

Having this connectivity is critical, not only to stimulate economic growth, but also to ensure a basic level of connectivity for our citizens, such as the ability to place a call to loved ones and first responders in the event of an emergency or disaster. As we begin to examine the current state of America's infrastructure and take steps to improve our nation's highways and buildings, we need to ensure that broadband is at the front and center of all infrastructure discussions.

I now yield to Chairman Blum for his opening statement.

