

**Chairman James Lankford Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government**

**Hearing to Review the FY2019 Budget Request for the U.S. Federal Communications  
Commission and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission**

**May 17, 2018**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order.

Before proceeding I would like to greet my colleague Senator Coons and note how pleased I am to be working with him in this capacity.

This hearing marks the first of our fiscal year 2019 budget hearings together for agencies under the jurisdiction of the Financial Services and General Government subcommittee.

I look forward to collaborating with the Ranking Member on our fiscal year 2019 bill and to partnering together at these hearings to conduct oversight of these agencies to ensure they are operating effectively and spending their resources responsibly.

Today we have with us the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Ajit Pai, and the Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, Joseph Simons. Thank you both for being here today.

Today's hearing is very timely given the recent debate in the Senate regarding an open Internet.

Since the Internet was developed, the market and consumers have driven innovation and expansion, which has caused the Internet to thrive in a relatively regulation-free environment.

I look forward to a thoughtful discussion of the steps the FCC and FTC will take to preserve an open and accessible Internet, in a manner that promotes new investment, encourages innovation, and protects consumers.

The FCC requests \$333 million for its operating budget in fiscal year 2019. While this funding is provided through regulatory fees rather than taxpayer dollars, the use of these funds are subject to appropriations and we have a responsibility to ensure they are spent wisely.

The FCC has identified four strategic goals for fiscal year 2019, including closing the digital divide, promoting innovation in the market for communications services, protecting consumer and public safety, and improving FCC regulatory processes.

These are laudable goals that I believe we all share. I look forward to hearing how the FCC plans to execute these goals using the requested budget authority.

I also look forward to hearing about FCC's Lifeline reforms. Oklahoma receives the second-largest allocation of Lifeline funds, which total more than \$128 million.

I applaud FCC Chairman Pai for pursuing real reform of the Tribal Lifeline subsidized cell phone program. This action will reduce fraud and waste in the program and make it more efficient for those who truly need it.

The FTC requests \$309.7 million to fulfill its mission of protecting consumers and promoting competition.

Of particular interest today is how the FTC is fulfilling its mission to prevent anticompetitive mergers and other anti-competitive business practices in the marketplace. Consolidation can fuel economic growth through the achievement of synergies and economies of scale, but it can also have unintended and negative consequences for consumers.

Chairman Simons, you were sworn in earlier this month. I appreciate you hitting the ground running by being here today.

I look forward to hearing your vision for the FTC and how the agency will protect consumers and police anti-competitive behavior all without unduly burdening legitimate business activity.

Again, thank you both again for appearing this morning.

I now turn to my colleague, the Ranking Member Senator Coons, for his opening remarks.

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