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March 6, 2018

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
Chairman, House Energy and
Commerce Committee Subcommittee
On Communications and Technology
2266 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Doyle
Ranking Member, House Energy and
Commerce Committee Subcommittee
On Communications and Technology
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman, House Energy and
Commerce Committee
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, House Energy and
Commerce Committee
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: March 6 Oversight Hearing of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Dear Subcommittee Chairman Blackburn, Subcommittee Ranking Member Doyle, Committee Chairman Walden, and Committee Ranking Member Pallone:

I am writing on behalf of the Utilities Technology Council (UTC) regarding the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology's March 6 Oversight Hearing of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Established in 1948, UTC is the global association representing energy and water providers on their needs related to the deployment of reliable and resilient information and communications technology (ICT). Energy providers use ICT networks to support the safe, reliable, and secure delivery of their essential services.

UTC applauds the Subcommittee for holding this important oversight hearing. As Subcommittee Chairman Blackburn said in her announcement of this hearing, this discussion will provide an opportunity for the Subcommittee and industry stakeholders to hear from NTIA Administrator David Redl about his priorities for the agency, particularly as they relate to spectrum.

NTIA has a number of responsibilities, including administering grant programs for broadband deployment, performing research on telecommunications and engineering, and much more. For energy providers, our interaction with NTIA is focused on spectrum allocation, as NTIA oversees spectrum allocation for the federal government.

For decades, utilities have owned, maintained and operated wireless communications systems to support mission-critical operations related to day-to-day reliability, storm response and restoration, and physical and cybersecurity. Spectrum is the lifeblood for utility wireless systems, and the need for spectrum access will only increase going forward. As the Subcommittee oversees NTIA's spectrum policies, we urge NTIA to continue to support access to spectrum by utilities, as well as for 5G services, the latter which could not function without the former.



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Nearly every federal government agency—the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, to name a few—recognize electric and natural gas utilities as among the most critical of all critical infrastructure industries. Our members meet, and often exceed, strict reliability requirements to keep the power on safely and reliably while at the same time planning for natural disasters and other hazards such as physical and cybersecurity attacks that could result in operational challenges. Spectrum is an essential element to our highly reliable electric infrastructure. Given the essential nature of our industry—along with NTIA’s mission of efficient spectrum use by the federal government—finding a mechanism to allow for spectrum sharing with utilities is an important initiative.

In fact, the government’s own research has identified the 406-420 MHz band as being lightly used and potentially ripe for partnership (“Report to the President: Realizing the Full Potential of Government-Held Spectrum to Spur Economic Growth,” Executive Office of the President, President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, July 2012). UTC has therefore initiated discussions with NTIA regarding a public-private partnership in this band, where utilities would build out the band with trusted equipment manufacturers, and work with the few existing government incumbents in the band to ensure continued robust availability for them. We look forward to agreement on concrete next steps in the coming weeks. UTC is also promoting the use of this band for utilities in the international spectrum arena, working with our affiliates in Brazil, Europe, and Canada.

As this Subcommittee knows, spectrum needs across the country are growing exponentially. Utilities are well aware of this and recognize the government’s responsibility for allocating spectrum in ways that support the public interest. UTC stands ready to assist in this effort. Our organization has resources and subject-matter experts willing to provide Subcommittee members with any information or resources they need.

Again, UTC thanks the Subcommittee for holding this hearing. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter and look forward to working with all of you going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy Ditto', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joy Ditto
President, CEO of the Utilities Technology Council

