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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Where the Jobs Are: There’s an App for That”
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
September 12, 2012

I thank Chairman Bono Mack for holding this hearing on the mobile app industry.

As we in Congress look for ways to accelerate the rate of job growth, it is essential to highlight growth industries and examine what makes them successful contributors to the national economic recovery.

Although they barely existed five years ago, mobile apps have emerged as a particularly innovative part of the information technology sector in the United States and they now play a major role in American life.

More than half of Americans with cell phones own a smartphone, giving them the advanced capabilities necessary to download and utilize some of the several hundred thousand apps that exist for work, education, organization, e-commerce, and entertainment.

These apps produce many benefits, like making us more productive by being able to edit documents on the go, keeping us in contact with friends and family through social media, or even allowing us to carry around a whole library of good books on a single device. Mobile apps also can have life-saving functions, particularly in the area of health IT, where there exist apps that help individuals check their blood pressure or glucose levels.

One notable benefit of a booming mobile apps industry is its impact on employment. A February study commissioned by TechNet estimated that mobile app development supported 460,000 jobs nationwide, including computer and mathematical jobs in tech companies, non-tech jobs in the same companies, and jobs created outside the tech industry through spillover effects. These jobs have been critical to my home state of California, which has over 20% of the total jobs estimated by the TechNet study. But I’m pleased to see that mobile apps jobs are quite geographically dispersed, with benefits for many states and regions.

With smartphone adoption expected to keep rising both here and abroad, U.S. app developers have the opportunity to continue to grow – and continued growth in the mobile app sector should lead to more jobs.

This hearing can help us understand what is needed to ensure this continued growth. But one step is essential: we must continue to emphasize technical and foreign language education so that existing and future companies in this sector have the personnel needed to be successful.

A recent study concludes that emerging markets like Brazil, Russia, India, and China will drive demand for the next 10 million apps. Our app developers need to be able to develop products for these markets.

At the same time, it is important to remember that although the app economy is a bright spot, our goal as policymakers must be enduring prosperity across all economic sectors. We must promote growth that restores middle-class security and improves economic mobility for the poor. While we in Congress work to control the federal deficit, we also must continue to make targeted investments in education, innovation, and infrastructure that can benefit all sectors of the economy.

I look forward to today's hearing. Thank you.