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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “The Future of Video”
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
June 27, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Walden, for holding this hearing to examine the future of video. We appreciate your willingness to work with us to assemble an interesting and diverse panel of witnesses.

Digital technology and broadband Internet access are dramatically altering how video content is produced, delivered, and consumed, promising more choices and greater value for consumers and new avenues for the creative community to distribute their work. Our challenge is to ensure a diversity of voices, robust competition, and greater access to these new platforms.

The panel of witnesses before us illustrates the many ways Americans can access video programming today – free over the air broadcasting; pay-television service from cable, satellite, and even traditional telephone companies; or video delivered through a broadband connection. Video programming is no longer the exclusive province of the television set. Consumers can now use tablets and smartphones to watch their preferred content. Innovative products and services are increasingly putting viewers in control of what, when, where, and how they watch video.

Even as we marvel at the incredible advances in technology, we must be mindful that policy choices we make today will impact the video landscape we see tomorrow. We should examine whether the legal framework created twenty years ago still works for a video market filled with choices that did not exist even two or three years ago. And we should remember that old challenges can persist in the face of new opportunities: competitors need a fair shot at gaining access to content, and independent creators need rules that prevent discrimination against carriage of their programming.

Two decades ago, the actions of this Committee and others in Congress helped once nascent industries like cable and satellite to offer new choices to consumers. Today, we must continue to ensure innovation in the video marketplace can continue to flourish. As consumers increasingly watch video through broadband, an open Internet that is accessible to all becomes

even more important. We need to carefully examine whether practices like broadband data usage caps are restricting consumer choice or being employed in an anti-competitive manner.

Also deserving of our scrutiny is whether major providers of video and broadband services will continue to have the incentives to compete in light of joint agreements and consolidation in the marketplace. Ranking Member Eshoo and I have requested a hearing to examine the proposed transactions between Verizon and four of the nation's largest cable companies, including an examination of the joint marketing agreements that would allow the companies to cross-market each others' services. I hope the Committee will convene a hearing so that members can consider the impact of these deals not only on the video and broadband markets, but also on wireless competition.

Thank you to our witnesses for participating in today's hearing. I look forward to your testimony.