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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Cybersecurity: The Pivotal Role of Communications Networks”
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
March 7, 2012

I am pleased that that the Subcommittee is holding this second hearing on cybersecurity. Nearly every week we learn of a new cyber breach or vulnerability, so it is vital that the Communications Subcommittee is focusing on this topic.

Like the smart grid, which was the topic of a hearing by the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations last month, communications networks are highly vulnerable to cyber attack. The potential for severe disruptions are high because communications networks are the common thread to all critical infrastructure sectors.

In fact, the public safety legislation that was just signed into law exemplifies these concerns. Under the new law, first responders will be relying on broadband communications networks to secure the safety of life and property. That will strengthen their ability to protect the public – but only if the networks are protected from cyber attacks.

Today, I look forward to continuing our discussion of the security threats faced by mobile devices and the proper role for this Subcommittee in ensuring cybersecurity. Our witnesses today -- representing a broad cross-section of internet service providers, as well as a handset manufacturer -- should further help our understanding of what risks threaten communications networks, what companies are doing to mitigate these risks, and what the Subcommittee might do to assist these efforts.

I believe the federal government has an important role to play in ensuring the cybersecurity of the nation’s communications networks. One important federal role is developing practices that will keep the internet safe. The FCC’s upcoming release of its cyber best practices report – developed by the well-regarded Communications Security, Reliability and Interoperability Council or “CSRIC” – will provide valuable guidance to industry and the Subcommittee.

I understand Chairman Walden is planning a third hearing with government agencies. I commend him for this series of hearing and look forward to hearing from witnesses representing the FCC and other relevant agencies.

Finally, I want to thank Chairman Walden for organizing a bipartisan working group to study cyber threats and inform the Subcommittee of its findings. This is a good opportunity for Subcommittee members and staff to work together on an issue of common concern. I look forward to hearing back from the working group and exploring with the Subcommittee potential further actions.

Thank you to our panel of witnesses for your participation today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.