

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “The Budget and Spending of the
Federal Communications Commission”
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
February 16, 2012

It has been over twenty years since Congress last reauthorized the FCC. Although this Subcommittee has always played an important oversight role with regard to FCC activities, I think it is fitting that we not only review the FCC’s policy actions, but also learn more about how the agency functions from a budgetary perspective.

By all accounts, the Genachowski FCC is well managed and operates in a transparent and open manner. Since he became Chairman, the agency has reformed the way dockets are managed. The number of Notices of Proposed Rulemakings that contain the full text of rules has increased from 38% to 85%.

The amount of time between a vote on a Commission decision and the release of the full text of the decision has decreased from 14 calendar days to three calendar days, with a majority of actions released in one calendar day. And the ex parte rules underwent significant reform.

The FCC has closed 999 dormant dockets, which represents approximately one-third of the agency’s open proceedings, while reducing the number of pending broadcast applications by 30% and the number of pending satellite applications by 89%.

In addition, the FCC has removed or streamlined unnecessary requirements. One hundred and ninety obsolete regulations have been removed since November 2011. And the Commission is working to eliminate unnecessary data collections and exempting small businesses from certain reporting requirements.

The Genachowski FCC has also made great efforts to work on a bipartisan basis. Ninety-five percent of agency action over the past two years has been bipartisan.

Finally, staff morale has improved so much that the FCC was named the most improved federal agency. This was accomplished despite a flat budget and flat staffing levels.

On the issues, the FCC has also been ambitious. The Commission has tackled difficult topics like universal service and inter-carrier compensation reform, open Internet protections, and numerous measures to promote broadband deployment.

All of these efforts require a tremendous amount of time and dedication from the FCC staff, as well as agency resources. Based on my experiences over the past few years working closely with the agency, I am convinced that the FCC employs a disproportionate number of the most talented, experienced, and dedicated public servants in government.

In order to address these management challenges, I am pleased that the Chairman also is focused on modernizing the agency itself, making it more responsive to consumer needs and industry challenges.

Chairman Genachowski, I look forward to hearing how you plan to capitalize and build upon this success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.