

**Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law
Hearing on “Examining the Proposed FCC Privacy Rules”
May 11, 2016**

I appreciate Chairman Flake holding this important oversight hearing. We have an excellent panel of witnesses and I thank you all for being here today. I’m looking forward to hearing your testimony on how the Federal Communication Commission’s proposed privacy rules affect consumers and broadband Internet providers.

It’s no secret that the growth and success of the Internet is due in large measure to the flexible, hands-off approach taken by regulators, which has characterized its early existence. It’s this approach that has led to incredible innovation – allowing Americans to access information and entertainment, learn, and do business in radically different ways. At the same time, the rapid growth in technology has also resulted in new threats to individual privacy in ways that many of us never imagined. As such, the Federal Trade Commission has been active in seeking to ensure that individual privacy remains protected in the ever connected Internet world that we live in today and in the future.

Nevertheless, as a result of the Obama Administration’s agenda that seeks to expand the executive branch’s power through increased federal regulations, the FCC is now forced to consider new Internet privacy regulations, which are the subject of today’s hearing. If enacted, it’s important that these new regulations don’t harm the Internet’s vibrancy, but instead ensure that the privacy protections of consumers around the country will be protected and in a better position at the end of the day.

I’d also like to take this opportunity to highlight some important telecommunications issues affecting my home state of Iowa. There are many rural areas where the cost of services to consumers remains high because of challenges to deploying and operating networks and facilities in these areas. I urge the FCC to keep these realities in mind as it continues to adjust the Universal Service Fund. In addition, rural Iowans rely on their phone connections to do business and stay connected to many vital services. Unfortunately, Iowans are still experiencing telephone calls not getting through, or they are receiving poor quality calls. I know many of my constituents have repeatedly reported issues to the FCC, but this persistent problem has led to them being unable to file complaints each time. I am pleased that the FCC has stepped up enforcement, but more needs to be done. Consumers should be able to expect at least a minimum level of call quality and reliability. The FCC should continue to address the problem of least cost routers that attempt to minimize their costs by failing to deliver calls to rural areas where the cost to provide phone service is higher. Rural America deserves better.