

**Remarks of FCC Commissioner Michael O’Rielly**  
**Initial Meeting of the Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee**  
**April 21, 2017**

My sincere thanks to Chairman Pai for inviting me to join you all today to address the inaugural meeting of the Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee. The Chairman deserves credit for bringing his proposal to fruition by creating this panel. A heartfelt welcome to all the appointees, their staff and guests for not only being here today but also for your willingness to participate, knowing that this work may take time away from your fulltime jobs and/or your families.

The issues before this new advisory committee are significant. The Commission is asking for your expertise to help us identify remaining barriers preventing the deployment of broadband services nationwide and to propose discrete solutions. Having worked on these issues for quite a long time, let me share with you that there is no one answer to either of these tasks. From weather and terrain to remoteness to jurisdictional fights and local power grabs, our nation’s broadband providers face a litany of obstacles that prevent all Americans from having access to sufficient broadband services. The good news is that the Commission has already taken a number of steps in this area and more are in the pipeline.

At the same time, we must not ignore the great progress that has already been made in broadband buildout. While not everyone has access to broadband today, we have seen tremendous advances in bringing service to previously unserved areas. Some of this has been the result of the Commission’s universal service program and decisions made over the last many years. The vast amount of recent successful deployments, however, have been made by private sector companies willing to put capital at risk, purchasing equipment and hiring employees to physically expand or upgrade the necessary network, in order to initiate services. That is the American way and we shouldn’t lose sight of it in our desire to pursue expedited buildout. In other words, we would never support nationalizing the broadband industry or creating new monopolies in exchange for faster and greater buildout to unserved areas.

In addition, I hope this committee will take a holistic approach when reviewing possible technology solutions. The Commission has tried to maintain a principle near and dear to me of technology neutrality. Clearly, it is not economically feasible to drag fiber to every unserved location. Instead, it will take multiple technologies. While that may make your review that much more challenging, accepting and honoring this reality will best serve everyone in the long run.

A word of warning as you prepare to examine these issues and possible solutions. At some point I am sure, someone will argue that one solution is just to throw money at the problem. In this case, the money they talk about comes from consumers in the form of higher service fees than are necessary. I will be extremely reluctant to consider any recommendation that proposes to increase costs on everyday Americans trying to survive in today’s economy.

In establishing this new panel, I appreciate the Chairman’s direction to return to the past practices of how advisory committees are run. This means the Commission assigns issues for the committee to examine but then steps back and awaits your views and recommendations. Our role is not to be overly involved and certainly not prescribe what you should find or recommend. The members of the committee should be given wide latitude to make the best recommendations based on the information available and their personal experiences.

Let me end where I began, by thanking you so very much in advance for all of your good work to come. I look forward to interacting with each of you in the near future and reading your recommendations.