

COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS
FUTURE OF WORK CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS LAUNCH REMARKS
JANUARY 15, 2020

I want to first begin by saying congratulations to Congresswoman Blunt Rochester and Congressman Steil for launching the Future of Work Caucus. I'm thrilled to be in the room to celebrate the start of what I know will be incredibly important work.

Some of you may be wondering why an FCC Commissioner is interested in the future of work. Like many of us focused on telecom and tech, I spend a lot of time thinking about the 5G future. You don't have to look too hard to see the transformative power of 5G – I'm excited about the benefits of ubiquitous high-speed connectivity, but I'm also laser-focused on our workforce whose lives will be disrupted by increased automation.

At the FCC, my number one priority is to ensure that all Americans are connected to affordable and reliable broadband. Broadband access will play a major role in shaping the future of work. It is essential to expanding access to opportunities; to generating growth for entrepreneurs starting their own businesses; to determining who has the ability to work remotely—a critical factor in the economic success of neighborhoods and cities and in the ability of Americans in rural communities to participate in enterprises far from home.

And I have to tell you, folks, we're just not there yet when it comes to ensuring that everyone is connected to broadband in this country. I know the Congresswoman sees this in various parts of Delaware. We're even seeing people on the wrong side of internet inequality in places like New York City where you have roughly 1.5 million people who lack access to both mobile broadband and fixed broadband. We have communities of color, low-income communities and rural communities who today cannot share in the benefits of broadband.

I know I only have a few minutes to chat with you all today so let me just close by saying that an automation tsunami is coming. It could be disastrous if we don't take action, and the time is now. Do we need to focus on re-training and up-skilling American workers with a high school diploma or less? Do we need to formulate a particular plan for communities of color and women that are disproportionately represented in jobs set to disappear? Do we need a collaboration between private and public stakeholders at all levels to drive solutions into our communities? Yes, yes, and yes! So let's get going.

This caucus presents a unique opportunity to solve several interconnected issues to ensure that all Americans—no matter their gender, age, race, geographic location, or economic status—can provide for their families both now and in generations to come.

I invite all of you to engage with and include the FCC on this intersection of broadband connectivity and the future of work. And, congratulations again to Congresswoman Blunt Rochester and Congressman Steil on taking the lead on this incredibly important issue.