

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Protecting Against National Security Threats to the Communications Supply Chain Through FCC Programs*, WC Docket No. 18-89, Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (February 17, 2021).

Over the last two years, the Commission has made significant progress in our efforts to replace the untrustworthy Huawei and ZTE equipment in American communications networks. When I convened the *Find It, Fix It, Fund It* workshop in June 2019, we had an enormous challenge in front us: identifying the untrustworthy equipment in our networks, setting out a plan to fix it, and providing funding for the replacement process. Today, with bipartisan support in Congress and widespread participation from across the telecommunications industry, we have gathered information about the scope of the security problem and developed a plan to require replacement of untrustworthy equipment and provide reimbursements.

The 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act marks an important milestone in our ongoing efforts. In response to the Commission's 2020 data collection on Huawei and ZTE equipment and services in U.S. networks, filers reported it would cost an estimated \$1.837 billion to remove and replace all covered equipment—significantly more than the \$1 billion envisioned by the 2019 Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act. I am pleased that Congress has now provided funding that will cover those estimated costs, and I am especially thankful for the leadership of Senator Gary Peters, who led the charge to expand access to federal replacement funding. I was pleased to support Senator Peters' Ensuring Network Security Act last summer, and I am glad to see those ideas adopted into law.

Today's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking begins the process of updating our rules in response to these legislative changes. I thank Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel for prioritizing this necessary step toward beginning the reimbursement process and the Wireline Competition Bureau for their hard work expediting this item for our consideration. Insecure networks by definition cannot provide the stable, reliable, always-on communications all Americans deserve. If we want all Americans to have the benefits of broadband, we must keep the focus on cybersecurity. I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue these efforts in the coming months.