

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Promoting the Deployment of 5G Open Radio Access Networks*, GN Docket No. 21-63

Nearly two years ago, I published an op-ed in the San Jose *Mercury News*: “The Security Necessity for U.S. Innovation in 5G Networks.” There, I distinctly identified Open and virtual RAN technology as a possible solution to the challenge of untrustworthy equipment in our wireless telecom networks. As I explained then, this technology might not only allow wireless carriers to replace their untrustworthy equipment, but it also could be a new network infrastructure model that increases efficiency and security while promoting American technological leadership.

Since that op-ed, I’m glad to say that the spotlight on Open RAN technology has only grown. Like many, I have tracked the announcements of new Open RAN partnerships and initiatives, including its key role in DISH’s standalone nationwide 5G nationwide network. Over the course of the last two years, I’ve discussed Open RAN’s potential at numerous events, including with Foreign Policy Magazine, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and with rural carriers at conferences and as part of a DHS outreach program.

The NOI is a comprehensive set of questions on all aspects of Open RAN technology. As we continue to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am particularly interested in how Open RAN might benefit our most vulnerable consumers. I therefore appreciate my colleagues agreeing to add questions about how Open RAN might increase the affordability of and access to 5G services for rural and low-income consumers. Every American should have access to high-quality, affordable broadband service, and I’m interested in learning if and how Open RAN technology can help us achieve that goal.

This proceeding also reminds us of the economic and national security importance of a domestic telecom equipment sector. Open RAN presents a chance for American companies to compete in this critical market. I’m looking forward to learning about what measures the Commission and other policymakers can and should undertake to promote American innovation in the development and implementation of Open RAN. As I have frequently indicated, this should include consideration of the role Open RAN might play in the replacement of untrustworthy equipment pursuant to the Secure Networks Act.

Since my op-ed, the promise of Open RAN technology has become even stronger. I look forward to the record as this proceeding moves forward.

Thank you to the staff of all the various Bureaus and Offices that worked on this matter.