

**REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER OLIVIA TRUSTY
FREE STATE FOUNDATION LUNCHEON ADDRESS**

**"CONNECTING AMERICA: MY VISION, PRIORITIES, AND THE NEW GOLDEN
AGE OF COMMUNICATIONS"**

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Opening: More Than a Bio: A Personal Glimpse

Good afternoon, and thank you to the Free State Foundation and Randy May for the warm welcome. I have long admired Free State's work to advance free markets, limited government, and the rule of law – principles that have shaped America's prosperity for generations.

Through your research, events, and thoughtful engagement with policymakers, you have helped ensure that communications policies encourage innovation, investment, and competition, in an ever-evolving and dynamic marketplace.

Those are exactly the principles we need to support today's *New Golden Age of America*, where our communications networks are the most advanced, secure, and widely available in the world, and where every American has the tools to thrive in the digital era.

Right now, we are at a unique convergence point. Policy, technology, and market forces are aligning in ways that can accelerate innovation and investment at a pace we have not seen in decades. The principles championed by the Free State Foundation: freedom, competition, and accountability, will determine whether this moment delivers on its promise.

With that in mind, the ideas I'll share with you today are shaped by my own journey, so let me tell you a little bit about myself, both the official version and a few things you probably won't find in my bio.

Some of you may have already read my official bio on the FCC's website: FCC Commissioner, former congressional staffer, with a career spanning both public service and the private sector.

Prior to joining the Commission, I served as a Professional Staff Member on the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services under Chairman Roger F. Wicker, as Policy Director on the

Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, as Professional Staff Member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and as Legislative Assistant to Congressman Bob Latta.

I began my career in the private sector, learning early on how business realities intersect with policy decisions.

But I'll share a few things you may *not* know about me.

First, I am a former gymnast, and for reasons I can't quite explain, I have a personal rule: I must do a handstand in every new place I visit. I have handstand photos in front of the Opera House in Sydney, Australia, on top of the Bad Lands in South Dakota, outside the US Embassy in South Korea, in front of the Kenai River in Alaska, in Dubrovnik, Croatia at the site of "King's Landing" where Game of Thrones was filmed, and, yes, even inside FCC headquarters. I won't confirm whether that was during office hours.

Second, I play the piano. But I will never, *ever* play publicly. I can handle a tough confirmation hearing in Congress, but a Mozart recital? That's where I draw the line.

Third, I genuinely love yard work, especially mowing my own lawn. It's one of the few times I can step away from screens and get some fresh air. Something about the steady rhythm of mowing is strangely relaxing, and more than once, I've solved a policy problem somewhere between the front yard and back fence.

And fourth, I am a firm believer in getting my steps in every day. Colleagues at the FCC have often spotted me speed walking the halls on various floors in between meetings throughout the day. Back when I worked on the Hill, I'd regularly walk the grounds for exercise, and more than once, a feisty fox decided to chase after me. I like to think it was just keeping me on pace.

These quirks remind me that we all bring something deeply personal to our work – habits, histories, hobbies, and human experiences that shape how we lead, how we listen, and how we serve.

Finding My Way into Telecom Policy

When it comes to my path into communications law and policy, it was anything but straight. I didn't grow up dreaming about Section 230 debates or spectrum allocation. I actually came to

Washington, D.C. to be a lobbyist, and, I'll admit, to make a lot of money. But something happened.

In my first private sector job, I had a mentor who would regularly discuss the history of the FCC with me and the importance of universal service principles. When I visited the company's territory in the Midwest, I saw the Universal Service Fund in action, expanding connectivity in rural America, creating jobs, and supporting local economies.

I also saw how quickly the market can change. Technological advancements and shifting consumer preferences compelled industry players to innovate constantly, offering new communications services to meet evolving demands.

Those experiences cemented my understanding that communications networks are essential to economic prosperity and individual opportunity, and that this sector is dynamic in a way few others are. From the early days of broadband expansion to today's AI-driven applications, it's never dull.

In my early days on the Hill, I started to grasp how even seemingly small regulatory choices could ripple across communities, raising costs, stalling innovation, or conversely, opening the floodgates for progress.

Over time, I became animated by one core question: how can we ensure that the communications networks of tomorrow, serve all Americans, not just some, not just the loudest or the wealthiest, or those in metropolitan areas, but everyone?

Lessons from Family and Capitol Hill

A lot of what has prepared me for this role does not come from the Code of Federal Regulations, any particular legislation I worked on, or the massive archive of regulatory filings submitted to the FCC over decades, but from my life experience.

I grew up in a big family, five sisters, one brother. We don't agree on everything; in fact, some family dinners could rival a congressional hearing in terms of passionate debate. But we also learned early that unity matters. That compromise is essential. And that listening, *really listening*, can turn disagreement into progress.

This family foundation has shaped my political temperament. It taught me to seek common ground even when it's hard, to absorb perspectives before dismissing them, and to never mistake volume for value.

As I mentioned, professionally, I've had the privilege of serving in the private sector, and in both the House and Senate, including on the Commerce and Armed Services Committees. Each role has challenged me to think differently, to wrestle with diverse policy issues, and to navigate competing priorities. At the FCC, I see the same need for pragmatism, collaboration, and a steady focus on results.

In Congress, I watched broadband policy become increasingly central to everything else, education, defense, public health, agriculture, and much more. I realized telecom policy is not just another issue, it's *the issue* that enables every other issue to function in the digital age.

Three Priorities for My FCC Tenure

So, what am I working toward at the FCC? Three priorities guide my work: (1) Universal connectivity, (2) public safety and national security, and (3) restoring U.S. leadership in next-generation technologies. These goals have a long history in communications policy, but I believe we need to move with a sense of urgency when applying them to today's communications landscape.

1. Universal Connectivity

Universal connectivity has been the Commission's core responsibility since its creation. I mentioned how learning about the history of the FCC and the importance of universal service helped lead me into telecom policy. That objective is right there in the first provision of the Communications Act, establishing the FCC "to make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States, . . . a rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges."

What does that mean today?

Every American, no matter their zip code, should have access to reliable, affordable broadband.

Connectivity is no longer a luxury, it's the foundation for education, healthcare, economic development, and civic engagement.

Just last month, I visited the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. UMMC is doing groundbreaking work, not just within its hospital walls, but across the entire state, using telehealth to reach patients in some of the most rural areas of Mississippi.

I spoke with doctors who are treating chronic illnesses, managing high-risk pregnancies, and delivering mental health care, all over video. But only if the broadband holds.

As one provider explained to me, a dropped signal in the Delta isn't just annoying, it's dangerous. Without broadband, their telehealth programs don't work. A dropped signal in a remote town isn't just an inconvenience, it could delay a diagnosis, interrupt a mental health visit, or force a patient to drive hours for care they could have received at home.

I also had the privilege of visiting Alaska, the last frontier, early in my tenure as FCC Commissioner.

Broadband connectivity is truly a game-changer in rural America, and nowhere is that more evident than in Alaska, where the rugged landscapes and vast distances make closing the digital divide especially challenging. My time touring the state underscored just how transformative broadband can be for remote communities.

For many Alaskans, they remain on the unconnected side of the digital divide. In conversations with industry leaders and federal, state, local, and Tribal partners, one message came through loud and clear: there is still significant work ahead to bring remote Alaska into the 21st century digital economy. I look forward to working with my colleagues at the FCC to help make that a reality.

These conversations in Mississippi and Alaska underscored what I already believed:

Connectivity is a health issue. It's a workforce issue, and it's a public safety issue, which is why it's critical that we bring greater transparency and accountability to our funding mechanisms. Dollars must flow where they are needed most, not where they are easiest to administer.

It's also why using all the available tools to reduce regulatory barriers that hinder broadband deployment is so important. This will help ensure that all Americans get faster access to reliable, modern networks. And it also ensures that, when federal support is needed, those funds will be used efficiently and effectively.

2. Enhancing Public Safety and National Security

My second priority is safeguarding the communications networks that underpin our economic and national security. This includes protecting consumers from scams, strengthening our emergency communications systems, and securing our networks from foreign threats. A secure communications system is a safe one.

The importance of this goal has only grown with time.

Think about how reliant we've become on real-time alerts, from natural disasters to AMBER alerts, and other emergencies. Our systems must not only be fast, but trusted.

I've also prioritized working closely with our national security partners to ensure we stay ahead of emerging threats, whether that's foreign infrastructure components or AI-generated misinformation from illegal robocalls.

I also believe the FCC plays a critical national security role and commend FCC Chairman Carr for establishing a national security council within the agency. We provide critical oversight of the networks that carry our most sensitive information, from military communications to personal data.

Engaging in greater collaboration with our intelligence and homeland security partners, and developing stronger tools to defend our networks from threats, will enhance our ability to respond when foreign actors seek to undermine our networks.

The bottom line is that national security in the digital age means more than troops and tanks. It means network resilience, secure supply chains, and the ability to mitigate threats before they become crises.

3. Restoring U.S. Leadership in Next-Gen Technologies

Finally, we must restore and strengthen American leadership in the technologies that will define the next century: 5G, 6G, Wi-Fi 7, satellite broadband, AI, and beyond. America should set the global standard. This means creating a regulatory environment that encourages investment, innovation, and competition.

Encouraging technological innovation has been a FCC responsibility since its formation. From the start, the Act has directed the FCC to “[s]tudy new uses for radio, provide for experimental uses of frequencies, and generally encourage the larger and more effective use of radio in the public interest.” Promoting innovation and U.S. technological leadership has likely never been more important than it is today.

Other nations, particularly China, are racing to shape global standards and dominate emerging communications infrastructure.

The U.S. cannot afford to sit on the sidelines or slow-walk progress.

I believe the FCC must be a catalyst, not a constraint, for innovation. That means acting thoughtfully, but with urgency to streamline approvals, reduce regulatory friction, and embrace a pro-growth posture.

Losing ground to adversarial nations who view communications infrastructure as geopolitical leverage may set us back indefinitely. Our leadership isn’t inevitable, it is earned. If we want America to lead in 6G, AI, and space-based networks, we must make spectrum available for commercial use, support R&D, incentivize private capital, and ensure American values are incorporated into international standards.

Four Pillars of the New Golden Age

At the FCC, I see four pillars that will define the success of these priorities: infrastructure, innovation, trust, and partnerships.

Infrastructure means ensuring that high-speed broadband reaches every home, business, and community, not just the urban centers, but in rural areas and underserved neighborhoods.

Innovation means creating regulatory certainty that encourages private sector investment, fosters competition, accelerates the deployment of new technologies, and promotes U.S. leadership abroad.

Trust means safeguarding privacy, security, and reliability, so that Americans can feel confident in the networks they depend on every day.

And **partnership means** consistent collaboration among federal agencies, Congress, state and local governments, the private sector, and organizations like the Free State Foundation.

Together, we can ensure that the United States continues to set the global standard for connectivity, security, and innovation.

The Free State Foundation has long argued that an open and competitive marketplace delivers better results than top-down control. I agree. We've seen time and time again that when companies have the freedom to innovate, and the incentive to compete, consumers benefit from better service, lower prices, and more choices.

When I think about what's at stake, I think about the rest of the world. Other countries, both allies and adversaries, are racing to lead in critical areas like spectrum allocation, AI integration into networks, and next-generation satellite constellations.

Nations like China are pouring resources into their telecom sectors not only to drive economic growth but to expand their geopolitical influence. If we want America to remain the world's communications leader, we can't slow down, hesitate or overregulate.

What Surprised Me Most at the FCC

Coming from the Hill, I saw a lot of what happened at the FCC, but not all of it.

Since coming to the Commission in June, what's surprised me most is the technical complexity of the work being done by our bureaus and offices every single day. Whether it's resolving interference disputes, managing orbital debris, or working to ensure the predictability and sustainability of universal service, these professionals are doing work that touches every American, often without them ever knowing it. They are the invisible backbone of the digital age.

And the other surprise? How quickly things can move when there's a clear agenda.

Chairman Carr has set a bold and focused course with his ***Build America Agenda***, and I'm grateful to be part of that momentum driving investment, innovation, and connectivity nationwide.

This agenda is not just about building infrastructure, it's about building confidence that America can still lead in the technologies that will define the next century.

It's about making sure that from the smallest rural town to the busiest port, every part of this country has the tools to connect, compete, and win.

From streamlining permitting for broadband deployment to ensuring spectrum policies keep pace with demand, the Build America Agenda recognizes that connectivity is the foundation for participation in the modern economy, and the Nation's global competitiveness.

We're at a point where transformative technologies: 5G and 6G, AI, satellite broadband, next-generation fiber, are converging in ways that can dramatically improve productivity, opportunity, and quality of life. To fully realize that potential, our policies must be forward-looking, grounded in evidence, and driven by the needs of the people we serve.

One thing that is not surprising is how great it is to work at the FCC.

It is the honor of my lifetime to be nominated by the President of the United States, our nation's chief executive, to serve during his second term.

I believe this period will be remembered as the *New Golden Age of America*, because of President Trump's leadership and what we will accomplish at the FCC under Chairman Carr's leadership and the Commission's Build America agenda.

My mission is simple: To serve the American people faithfully and fully. To do the work. To get results. And to ensure the benefits of connectivity reach everyone, everywhere.

Collegiality Despite Differences

Yes, the commissioners at the FCC have different perspectives. We don't always vote the same way. But, we've found a remarkable spirit of respect and public-mindedness in our work. Yes, there are lively debates. But there's also mutual respect and a shared purpose.

We agree that America must lead in technology. That spectrum should be used efficiently. That rural communities matter. That consumers deserve transparency and protection.

In my experience, disagreement, handled with civility, often leads to better policy. To sharper thinking. And to decisions that stand the test of time.

Closing: The Lifelines of America

In closing, I'll say this:

Communications networks are not just pipes and signals. They are the lifelines of our economy, our communities, and our republic.

When they're strong, we're strong.

When they're secure, we're safe.

And when we invest in the future, we invest in every student, every patient, every entrepreneur, and every American who needs a digital bridge to their next opportunity.

So, as we look ahead, my message is simple: We are standing at the threshold of a New Golden Age of Communications.

The choices we make today, about spectrum, infrastructure, competition, and security, will define our nation's trajectory for decades. If we get it right, we will empower every American to participate fully in the digital economy, strengthen our national security, and preserve the principles of freedom and opportunity that make our country unique.

And I believe we will get it right. Because I see the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs, the dedication of our public servants, and the passion of organizations like the Free State Foundation. This is our moment to build, not just for ourselves, but for generations to come.

And if, along the way, I happen to find a good spot for a handstand, you can bet I'll take it.

Thank you, Free State Foundation, for the work you do, and for inviting me to share my vision today.