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Lee: Congress Should Set Clear Priorities for Trade Agreements That Can Lower Barriers for Digital Goods and Services

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Joint Economic Committee Vice Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT) today delivered the following opening statement during a hearing entitled “The Dynamic Gains from Free Digital Trade for the U.S. Economy”:

“Good morning and welcome to the Joint Economic Committee’s hearing on digital trade. Chairman Tiberi could not be here today and has asked me to chair the hearing. I want to welcome my colleague Ranking Member Heinrich, the other Members of this Committee, and the panel of expert witnesses who are appearing before us today.

“What is digital trade? It covers a wide variety of economic activity, including: international orders transmitted through websites; global connectivity enabled by email and voice-over internet protocol; international banking; and data transmissions to manage global supply chains.

“Advancements in technology mean that digital trade is capable of delivering ongoing improvements in production, distribution, and value for Americans. U.S. firms have been pioneers and global leaders on the digital technology frontier. American consumers and businesses greatly benefit from the ability to buy and sell across borders and gain access to new products and customers.

“We are swiftly approaching the point where the word “digital” will be an unnecessary adjective for trade. Although, I’m sure trade lawyers will want to maintain the extra level of specificity for billing purposes.

“But we need to work both domestically and internationally to facilitate trade and innovation. We should seek to ensure that sensible regulations and standards are put in place for the protection of intellectual property and private information.

“Congress has set clear priorities for negotiating trade agreements that can lower trade barriers for digital goods and services, and the Trump administration is pursuing those priorities in the current NAFTA discussions.

“It is critical for future U.S. economic success to ensure a regulatory setting in which innovators, entrepreneurs, and businesses can experiment with new technology and succeed in a global market.

“I will now yield to Representative Paulsen, who earlier this year launched the Bipartisan Digital Trade Caucus in the House of Representatives.”

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