

Statement of Chairwoman Edith Ramirez
“The FTC at 100: Where Do We Go From Here?”
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC
December 3, 2013

Chairman Terry, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting us to testify regarding the Federal Trade Commission’s work as we approach our 100th year. We appreciate this opportunity to discuss the FTC’s unique dual and complementary role in promoting competition and protecting consumers.

The FTC has a tradition of working at the forefront of the most important emerging issues of the day. We do so using a mix of law enforcement, advocacy, research, and business and consumer education. Changes to the marketplace, like rapid technological innovation and globalization, drive much of our work. However, over the last century, our goals have remained fundamentally the same: to prevent fraud and deception, ensure that companies keep their promises to consumers, and remove barriers to competition – all of which promote an even playing field that allows law-abiding businesses to flourish.

With a staff of approximately 1,200 and a FY 2013 budget of \$296 million, the FTC has delivered results that belie its modest size. Over the last three years, we have returned over \$196 million to victims of deceptive and unfair conduct and delivered an additional \$117 million in civil penalties and ill-gotten gains to the U.S. Treasury. We have also saved consumers approximately \$3 billion in estimated economic injury by stopping anticompetitive practices and mergers.

I. Consumer Protection

The hallmark of the FTC's consumer protection work is anticipating and tackling new marketplace issues and problems. In the 1960s, we were the first federal agency to act on the health threat created by cigarettes – forcing manufacturers to implement health warnings in their advertising. In the 1980s and 90s, we used our congressional authority to launch a law enforcement program which continues today – obtaining federal court restraining orders, consumer redress, and permanent prohibitions against thousands of consumer deception schemes. And, in the early 2000s, the agency took action against unwanted telemarketing calls by implementing the Do Not Call Registry, which kicked off our role as an early protector of consumers' privacy both offline and online.

The FTC continues to combat scams most familiar to consumers – such as harassing telemarketers, sham weight-loss cures, and fraudulent business opportunities – and newer harms associated with emerging technologies and business practices.

II. Competition

As in our consumer protection efforts, we have a long history of promoting competition in the marketplace, using enforcement, advocacy, and research. We have issued the influential horizontal merger guidelines along with the Department of Justice, advanced merger and monopolization law with many important victories in crucial cases, and released reports that have helped shape competition policy and enforcement in critical areas to consumers and the economy, such as technology and healthcare.

In more recent years, we have turned our attention to those emerging activities that pose the greatest threat to vigorous competition. For example, we have worked to stop drug companies from stifling the entry of generic drugs by entering into “pay-for-delay” agreements,

consumers, protect privacy and data security, and address anticompetitive conduct in the healthcare industry;

- Second, Maureen Ohlhausen, who will describe the FTC's efforts to address and adapt to external changes and challenges, including technological advances