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Prepared Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley

Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights

"The Power of Google: Serving Consumers or Threatening Competition?"

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Chairman Kohl and Senator Lee, I appreciate you holding this antitrust oversight hearing this afternoon. I know that people back in my home state of Iowa are following what is going on in this committee room with interest. That's because in rural Iowa, many companies – both big and small – depend on open and fair access to the internet to reach potential customers and to expand their businesses.

I've heard from Iowans who are concerned that Google is unfairly using its market power to manipulate internet search and drive web traffic to its own sites to the detriment of small businesses and consumers. They are frustrated by business practices that are not transparent or fair. They are concerned that Google is engaging in anti-competitive behavior that is thwarting a competitive marketplace.

However, I've also heard from Iowans who are extremely supportive of Google's products and services. These people rely on those products and services to access customers and grow their businesses. They are concerned that the federal government is being overly aggressive, and will place burdensome rules and regulations on a company that is creating good jobs and innovative consumer tools for Iowans.

I agree that we should not be penalizing successful companies that are innovating, providing cost-effective and productive services, and creating the jobs of the future. I agree with those constituents that tell me that "it is important to let the free market continue to work, and for consumers to be able to freely choose which online services they use" because "this is a better way to provide additional entrepreneurship and job growth."

However, I also believe that companies should not take unfair advantage of their market power, use their dominance to quash worthy competitors, and engage in deceptive business practices that negatively impact the marketplace, small businesses and consumers. The government should not be imposing burdensome regulations or "picking winners and losers." Yet, the antitrust laws have a role to play in ensuring that there is a level playing field for all. I don't have a problem with companies being fierce competitors – however, all companies must play by the rules. Companies should employ open, fair and transparent business practices that do not harm competition or impede consumer choice.

So I come to this hearing to ask questions from both sides. I'm here to listen and ask questions raised by my constituents. I'm here to make sure that the voices of Iowans are heard in this discussion. Thank you.

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