

MARK PRYOR
ARKANSAS

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

255 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-2353

500 PRESIDENT CLINTON AVENUE
SUITE 401
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72201
(501) 324-6336
TOLL FREE: (877) 259-9602
<http://pryor.senate.gov>

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 20, 2013

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

1261

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet, I have seen firsthand how critical wireless broadband is for consumers. Further, I know that the ever-increasing consumer demand for wireless services is driving the need to make more spectrum available for wireless services. I want to commend the work the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has done to address our nation's growing spectrum needs and to foster continued innovation and expansion of the nation's wireless networks.

We cannot forget that the increased consumer demand for wireless services is not confined just to services that use licensed spectrum. As the Subcommittee heard during its recent "State of Wireless" hearing, unlicensed wireless services are an essential part of our communications networks and the larger communications technology ecosystem. In fact, unlicensed spectrum has become a critical access point to the Internet for consumers and wireless communications service providers alike. Mobile data traffic is being offloaded onto unlicensed spectrum, and projections indicate that offloading will increase dramatically in the coming years as consumers use their smartphones and other mobile devices for video and other data-intensive services.

The dramatic growth in use of WiFi and other unlicensed services is straining our existing unlicensed bands. I appreciate that the Commission has been exploring ways to relieve this pressure by opening up additional spectrum in the 5 GHz band for unlicensed services. This proceeding is a necessary step to make sure that our nation's unlicensed networks keep pace with user expectations and advances in technology, while still protecting other licensees that have operations in the 5 GHz band.

I understand that it may be possible to make strides in the short term to ease unlicensed spectrum congestion by enhancing unlicensed operations in part of the 5 GHz band, while continuing to study how to do more in the future. In particular, my understanding is that there is evidence in the record that indicates that the Commission can remove certain limitations on unlicensed operations in the 5.150-5.250 GHz range (the U-NII-1 band) while still respecting incumbent uses. Taking this step could immediately expand capacity for consumers using existing unlicensed equipment and pave the way for introduction of a new generation of WiFi

technology, and swift action by the Commission could simultaneously unleash waves of innovation leading to new products and services down the road.

I understand the Commission has already gathered a significant amount of technical data on whether and how to open up the U-NII-1 band for enhanced unlicensed operations. I encourage the Commission to review this data carefully to make an informed decision whether it can move forward on the U-NII-1 band in the near term. Quickly making 100 megahertz of prime spectrum available for unlicensed operations would be an immediate benefit for the economy and a boon for consumers. If the Commission feels it has sufficient information, I encourage you to seize this opportunity, while continuing to look at other ways to ease unlicensed spectrum congestion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Senator Mark Pryor

Cc: FCC Commissioner Clyburn
FCC Commissioner Rosenworcel
FCC Commissioner Pai
FCC Commissioner O'Rielly