

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 11, 2013

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

We understand that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is set to consider updates to its rules in order to allow passengers to use their cell phones onboard aircraft. Like many Americans, we have significant concerns about whether the use of cellular voice services during flights is a good idea. In fact, we oppose the use of voice services during flights. However, as Members of Congress who are concerned about making sure that our laws and regulations keep up with the pace of modern technologies, we support this process, and believe that appropriate actions can be taken to modernize an outdated technological rule and enhance passenger connectivity while in flight.

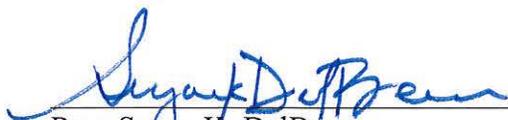
In-flight technology has been transformed over the past several years as U.S. airline passengers have been able to use their laptops and other Wi-Fi-enabled devices to remain connected onboard aircraft, as a result of the FCC's efforts to facilitate in-flight connectivity technologies. According to a study by IHS, the percentage of global air carriers offering this technology (in-flight Wi-Fi or cellular connectivity) has risen to 21 % of the global fleet, up from 15 percent in 2012 and 12 percent in 2011, and is projected to reach 50% by 2022.

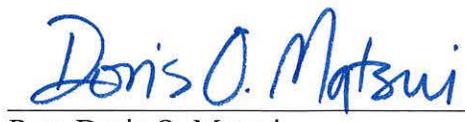
We understand that passenger use of mobile devices will allow access to a wide range of in-flight communications applications, including text, e-mail, and data applications. We also understand that the FCC appropriately seeks to provide airlines with a choice as to what applications their passengers will be able to access, rather than mandate specific requirements for U.S. airlines. Of course, the FCC should remain sensitive to the valid concerns raised by interested parties, including those related to possible in-flight use of voice applications.

Ultimately, however, it will be up to each individual airline to decide the best course of action for their customers. It is our understanding that the technology itself offers the airlines the flexibility to deploy a system that can allow data only. We would support that goal and encourage the FCC to explore fully this capability in its proceeding.

We look forward to the FCC developing a record that will enable in-flight connectivity options that are available elsewhere in the world to be available in the United States.

Sincerely,

  
Rep. Suzan K. DelBene

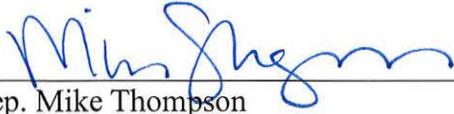
  
Rep. Doris O. Matsui



Rep. Anna G. Eshoo



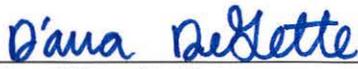
Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.



Rep. Mike Thompson



Rep. Michael F. Doyle



Rep. Diana DeGette



Rep. Peter Welch



Rep. Eric Swalwell



Rep. Michael M. Honda