



PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
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News Media Information 202-418-0500
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DA 26-210

Released: February 27, 2026

WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU SEEKS COMMENT ON APPALACHIAN WIRELESS PETITION FOR WAIVER OF THE COMMISSION'S SECTION 27.16(e) HANDSET UNLOCKING RULE

WT Docket Nos. 06-150 and 24-186

Comments Due: March 30, 2026

Reply Comments Due: April 13, 2026

The Wireless Telecommunications Bureau seeks comment on a petition for waiver filed by East Kentucky Network, LLC d/b/a Appalachian Wireless (Appalachian Wireless) on February 20, 2026, in WT Docket Nos. 06-150 and 24-186, regarding the handset unlocking rule in section 27.16(e) of the Commission's rules.¹ Appalachian Wireless states that it is subject to the requirements of this rule because it has entered into a Spectrum Manager Lease agreement with Verizon relating to certain upper 700 MHz C-Block spectrum and that as part of this lease agreement it must comply with the open access requirements for C Block licenses, including the handset unlocking rule.²

Appalachian Wireless requests a waiver of the unlocking rule pursuant to section 1.3 of the Commission's rules on the same terms and conditions and for the same duration as the waiver that the Commission recently granted Verizon.³ Appalachian Wireless states that special circumstances exist to grant the waiver because as the Commission has recently stated in granting Verizon's waiver the handset unlocking rule harms American consumers and competition, and has failed to deter device fraud.⁴ Further, Appalachian Wireless states that granting the waiver will advance the public interest by reducing fraud, promoting competition, protecting rural and low-income consumers, and restoring a more rational and even-handed regulatory framework pending any future Commission action addressing handset unlocking on an industry-wide basis.⁵

Ex Parte Rules. The proceeding shall be treated as a "permit-but-disclose" proceeding in accordance with the Commission's *ex parte* rules. Persons making *ex parte* presentations must file a copy of any written presentation or a memorandum summarizing any oral presentation within two business days after the presentation (unless a different deadline applicable to the Sunshine period applies). Persons making oral *ex parte* presentations are reminded that memoranda summarizing the presentation must: (1) list all persons attending or otherwise participating in the meeting at which the *ex parte* presentation was made, and (2) summarize all data presented and arguments made during the presentation. If the

¹ East Kentucky Network, LLC d/b/a Appalachian Wireless Petition for Waiver, WT Docket Nos. 06-150 and 24-186 (filed Feb. 20, 2026) (Appalachian Wireless Petition).

² Specifically, Appalachian Wireless states that it is a participant in Verizon's LTE in Rural America (LRA) program and that, as a participant in the LRA program, it has entered into the Spectrum Manager Lease agreement with Verizon that requires compliance with the handset unlocking rule. Appalachian Wireless Petition at 2.

³ *Id.* at 7.

⁴ *Id.* at 4-5.

⁵ *Id.* at 7-8.

presentation consisted in whole or in part of the presentation of data or arguments already reflected in the presenter's written comments, memoranda or other filings in the proceeding, the presenter may provide citations to such data or arguments in his or her prior comments, memoranda, or other filings (specifying the relevant page and/or paragraph numbers where such data or arguments can be found) in lieu of summarizing them in the memorandum. Documents shown or given to Commission staff during *ex parte* meetings are deemed to be written *ex parte* presentations and must be filed consistent with rule 1.1206(b). In proceedings governed by rule 1.49(f) or for which the Commission has made available a method of electronic filing, written *ex parte* presentations and memoranda summarizing oral *ex parte* presentations, and all attachments thereto, must be filed through the electronic comment filing system available for that proceeding, and must be filed in their native format (e.g., .doc, .xml, .ppt, searchable .pdf). Participants in this proceeding should familiarize themselves with the Commission's *ex parte* rules.

Filing Requirements. Interested parties may file comments and reply comments on or before the dates indicated on the first page of this document and must reference WT Docket Nos. 06-150 and 24-186. Comments may be filed using the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS).

- *Electronic Filers:* Comments may be filed electronically using the Internet by accessing the ECFS: <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs>.
- *Paper Filers:* Parties filing by paper must file an original and one copy of each filing.
 - Filings can be sent by hand or messenger delivery, by commercial courier, or by the U.S. Postal Service. **All filings must be addressed to the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission.**
 - Hand-delivered or messenger-delivered paper filings for the Commission's Secretary are accepted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. by the FCC's mailing contractor at 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. All hand deliveries must be held together with rubber bands or fasteners. Any envelopes and boxes must be disposed of before entering the building.
 - Commercial courier deliveries (any deliveries not by the U.S. Postal Service) must be sent to 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701.
 - Filings sent by U.S. Postal Service First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express must be sent to 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554.

People with Disabilities. To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or call the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530.

Availability of Documents. Comments, reply comments, and *ex parte* submissions will be available via ECFS. Documents will be available electronically in ASCII, Microsoft Word, and/or Adobe Acrobat.

Additional Information. For further information about this proceeding, contact Eli Johnson, FCC, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Competition & Infrastructure Policy Divisions, Eli.Johnson@fcc.gov.

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