

**FCC Public *En Banc* Hearing in Brooklyn, NY on  
Public Safety Interoperable Communications and the 700 MHz D Block Proceeding  
July 30, 2008**

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. McDOWELL**

Thank you all for having us here in Brooklyn, New York. Thank you not only for your presence here today but for your leadership on these issues, which are so important to our nation's security. I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you for your dedicated service to our country. I hope you will continue to let me know what I can do to help you as we move forward together to keep our country secure.

As we know, the FCC's Auction 73 raised a record amount of revenue, over \$19 billion. The auction also succeeded in reallocating this valuable slice of the airwaves to licensees who will use it to roll out new and exciting wireless broadband services, enriching the lives of all Americans. Nonetheless, we are here today because the FCC failed to entice a winning bidder to build a state-of-the-art, nationwide, interoperable network for America's public safety users. Today gives us an opportunity to move beyond rhetoric, analyze the lessons learned and move forward - together - in a constructive and positive manner.

Last summer's 700 MHz Order included a plan to spark a public/private partnership by allocating 10 megahertz of spectrum for public safety use, known as the "D Block." This spectrum block was added on top of the 24 megahertz Congress allocated to public safety in 1997. The Commission created this framework after working closely with the public safety community, and I supported it. Hopes were high that this additional spectrum would provide an incentive for a private entity to construct a

nationwide, interoperable, broadband network all of us have been discussing since the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Even though public safety already had at its disposal 97 megahertz of spectrum in total to serve America's approximately two million public safety users – including 24 megahertz in the 700 MHz Band, and 50 megahertz in the 4.9 GHz Band – the Commission went out of its way to allocate an *additional* 10 megahertz above and beyond what Congress gave. We did this to try to create an incentive for the private side of the public/private partnership to invest risk capital to build a nationwide public safety network suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. In the absence of congressionally-appropriated funding for this network, the Commission concluded that this type of public/private partnership was the best way to jump-start funding and construction. I thank the Chairman for his leadership.

I have met with a number of parties this spring and summer. Early critiques of the Commission's efforts reveal that potential bidders were deterred by onerous build-out and service requirements that required the eventual licensee to incur massive costs in an atmosphere of extreme uncertainty regarding how many, if any, public safety entities might actually sign up as paying customers. On the other hand, I am greatly encouraged by the creative proposals put forward more recently, in response to our post-auction request for comment.

Ours is an important goal: To equip our first responders with the communications capabilities necessary to best serve the American public in emergency situations. I look forward to gathering additional insights from our distinguished panelists. By coordinating closely, we can and will succeed.