



NEWS

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See *MCI v. FCC*, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI APPLAUDS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE FOR HIGHLIGHTING PROMISE OF 5 GHZ BAND FOR UNLICENSED USE AND CALLS FOR PROMPT FCC ACTION TO FACILITATE GREATER USE OF 5 GHZ BAND

I applaud the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce for holding a hearing today on the “Challenges and Opportunities in the 5 GHz Spectrum Band.”

As I testified before the Subcommittee last December, the 5 GHz band is “tailor made” for the next generation of Wi-Fi.¹ Its propagation characteristics minimize interference in the band and the wide, contiguous blocks of 5 GHz spectrum allow for extremely fast connections, with throughput reaching 1 gigabit per second. The technical standard to accomplish this, 802.11ac, already exists, and devices implementing it are already being built. All of this means we can rapidly realize these benefits: more robust and ubiquitous wireless coverage for consumers; more manageable networks for providers; a new test bed for innovative application developers; and other benefits we can’t even conceive today.

In the Middle Class Tax Cut and Job Creation Act of 2012, Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission to make available up to 195 MHz of additional spectrum in the 5 GHz band for unlicensed use. The Commission launched a rulemaking proceeding earlier this year to do just that. But there is more to do.

This past summer, I urged the FCC to move forward with its 5 GHz proceeding in stages,² and I reiterate that call today. For example, the Commission should move promptly to modify the service rules for the U-NII-1 band. By raising the power limits on the U-NII-1 band and allowing for outdoor use, we can make this band attractive for commercial Wi-Fi while safeguarding incumbent users. Likewise, we should act quickly to add 25 MHz to the U-NII-3 band. Among other things, this measure would reduce certification costs for companies

¹ Statement of FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai Before the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, “Keeping the New Broadband Spectrum Law on Track,” at 3 (Dec. 12, 2012), <http://go.usa.gov/WRbh>.

² Remarks of FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai, “Looking Back and Looking Ahead: The FCC and the Path to the Digital Economy,” at 3 (July 25, 2013), <http://go.usa.gov/WRj4>.

manufacturing devices for this band. Given the growing congestion in the 2.4 GHz band (which consumers commonly rely upon for Wi-Fi access), we should not let a few difficult issues delay us from making progress on the easier ones, like these.

I hope that today's hearing will highlight the benefits of unlicensed operations in the 5 GHz band and spur the FCC to take action. Unlicensed use of spectrum is a critical component of a sensible national spectrum policy, increasingly so as mobile broadband becomes the norm. And there is no band better for unlicensed use than 5 GHz.