



275

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 17, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Mignon Clyburn, Michael O’Rielly, Brendan Carr, and Jessica Rosenworcel
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner O’Rielly, Commissioner Carr, and Commissioner Rosenworcel,

I write today regarding your recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that proposes to change how licenses are issued in the 3.5 GHz Band.

Expanding access to broadband is the infrastructure challenge of our generation, and we must use every opportunity to examine new solutions to bringing fast, reliable, and affordable broadband to all communities across the country – urban, suburban and rural. The 3.5 GHz Band holds great potential for next generation connectivity and for ensuring that America is a leader in 5G. It can also provide a cost-effective solution for delivering fixed wireless broadband in rural areas.

The adoption of a license size no bigger than counties will encourage deployment and investment by new entrants bringing competition to the market. Conversely, increasing the geographic licensing size to Partial Economic Areas (PEAs) will likely limit the 3.5 GHz Band to only the largest incumbent wireless carriers and push out new entrants, including smaller and rural carriers that have existing infrastructure nearby. In addition, a large geographic license size would enable a provider to buildout to only the most densely populated areas within each license area, resulting in rural communities once again being left behind.

Additionally, a hybrid model that designates larger licenses in the top markets and the smaller census tract licensing areas everywhere else does not solve the problems associated with just PEAs. Such a compromise would cede the top markets to the incumbent carriers, foreclosing the benefits of increased wireless competition and its benefits of lower prices and more innovative services for the millions of consumers who live there. It also would do nothing to encourage buildout to the less densely populated areas.

I encourage the Commission to reject the expansion of geographic licensing areas to PEAs in any markets, as this would benefit only the largest carriers. Using smaller license areas will foster greater wireless competition and investment in wireless 5G networks and better serve the needs of rural Americans.

Sincerely,

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

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