

United States Senate

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April 1, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Preventing interference in the 6 GHz band, ET Docket No. 18-295

Dear Chairman Pai,

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) moves forward on its proposal to allow unlicensed operations in the 6 GHz spectrum band, I respectfully urge you to ensure that incumbent license holders, especially those used by critical infrastructure owners and operators, are protected from potential radiofrequency interference. Given the importance of these services for our economic and national security, the Commission must ensure that their licensed microwave systems are protected against potential interference from unlicensed operations in the 6 GHz band.

Over the past few months, I have heard from utilities in my state about the above-referenced proposed rulemaking and the detrimental impact it could have on safe, reliable and secure delivery of essential electricity services. Electricity, gas, and water utilities use the 6 GHz band for voice and data communications to support remote monitoring of critical-infrastructure systems, emergency response, storm restoration, and general situational awareness. Allowing unlicensed use in the 6 GHz band without adequate interference protections would pose significant risks to safety and operational reliability of utility systems.

The 6 GHz band is uniquely suited to deliver the long-distance, low latency communications utilities and other critical infrastructure industries (CII) require. Interference on a utility's communication network reduces its ability to respond to problems or abnormalities within their service territory, degrading their situational awareness and potentially compromising electric reliability. Incumbent utility licensees will have few, if any, other spectrum bands to choose from should they be forced to relocate out of the 6 GHz band due to this proceeding.

I am well aware that our nation's need for spectrum is growing as the number of wireless networks and devices proliferate, and I appreciate the Commission's continued efforts to ensure the efficient and effective use of spectrum. I am concerned, however, that the recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking does not adequately balance the public interest in protecting the safe, reliable and secure delivery of essential services by utilities and other CII users. I am also concerned that the interference risk would not be effectively mitigated by the proposed automated frequency coordination (AFC) system as envisioned in this proceeding.

Given the importance of essential energy and water services to our nation's wellbeing, I encourage you to consider how this proposal could impact the critical infrastructure industries who rely on the 6 GHz band for their vital communications networks.

Thank you for considering these views and for your service to America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Kennedy
United States Senator