



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Mike Levin
U.S. House of Representatives
1030 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Levin:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's approach to the licensing of large constellations. As you note, the nation's outer space activities are evolving rapidly. In light of this, I wholeheartedly agree that coordinated action to ensure the long-term sustainability and safety of space is needed. The Commission is at work on these issues in a number of separate proceedings. The agency also considers them as part of its regular review of satellite applications.

The increased number of satellite deployments in low-earth orbits and the related matter of orbital debris mitigation represent a significant challenge to the existing space economy and the space-based services that the government, businesses, and individuals rely on to communicate, navigate, and perform other vital functions. Last year, the Commission adopted a comprehensive update to its rules regarding orbital debris mitigation. This was the first broad update to these policies since 2004. The new rules address disclosures regarding collision risks and safety measures, casualty risk assessments, post-mission disposal, spacecraft tracking and data sharing, and frequency coordination during orbit raising, among other issues. Taken together, I believe these rule changes will help ensure that Commission decisions are consistent with the public interest in space remaining viable for future satellites and the many services they provide to the public.

In connection with these rule changes, the Commission also sought further comment on additional steps the agency can take to promote space safety. For example, the agency sought comment on standards for evaluating aggregate constellation risk, satellite maneuverability above a certain low earth orbit altitude, and indemnification requirements. The Commission's International Bureau is reviewing the record that was developed on these additional issues and will include your letter in the record of that proceeding.

The Commission also works with our federal partners on international efforts to promote the long-term sustainability of activities in outer space, including through improvements in debris mitigation practices. To this end, the staff of the agency provide ongoing support for U.S. activities in the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The staff also participate as part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration delegation to the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, or IADC, a coordinating committee for space debris research and mitigation activities of the world's leading space agencies.

Finally, the Commission takes seriously its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The agency implements the provisions of NEPA in Part 1, Subpart I of its rules, and it reviews satellite applications consistent with these rules.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Rosenworcel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Rosenworcel