

**REMARKS OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
AT THE SATELLITE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION'S
24TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP DINNER
WASHINGTON, DC
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Good evening! It is great to see all of you in this room tonight.

Now it is no secret that in Washington we take tradition seriously. This is a city of monuments and memorials. And if you live here, you have probably heard the joke that if DC-ers do something once it is happenstance; twice is coincidence; but if we do it three times it is a national tradition. Well, this is the 24th Annual Leadership Dinner hosted by the Satellite Industry Association. A few more of these and you might qualify for a federal holiday.

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you tonight—and congratulations on 24 years. When you are nearing a quarter of a century, I know the tendency is to look back and recount past glories and talk about the golden years. But this evening I want to do just the opposite. Because I think that the best is ahead.

In fact, the agency I lead—the Federal Communications Commission—has big plans for that future. Because a few months ago, I announced a shake-up at the FCC. I shared my plans to reorganize the agency to create a new Space Bureau. This effort is part of what I believe needs to be a broader rethinking of satellite policy in the United States. There are now new technologies in the space industry, thousands of satellite applications pending before the agency, and so many more innovations on the horizon that I believe we cannot keep doing things the old way and expect to thrive in the new.

So with the new Space Bureau we are building a faster, more nimble, and more transparent satellite regulatory process. But that is not all. By bringing focus and resources to our work in this sector, I believe the new Space Bureau is going to support United States leadership in the growing space economy—and that's important.

Let me start with an update on our progress. In January, I circulated the details of my plan for a new Space Bureau to my colleagues at the FCC. It was adopted unanimously, and I want to thank Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Starks, and Commissioner Simington for their support. We also shared our plans with the Office of Management and Budget and received their sign off. And right now, we are working with Congress to get their approvals for the planned reorganization. All of this means that we should be up and running soon.

Now while we have been shaking things up at the FCC, there have been some pretty big moves elsewhere.

When it comes to domestic space policy, the White House released a new Interagency Roadmap to Support Space-Related STEM Education and Workforce. On top of that, the National Space Council is developing a new framework for novel space activities. Plus, NASA's

Double Asteroid Redirection Test—or DART spacecraft—was literally a smashing success. It hit an asteroid just to see if it could change the trajectory of any planet-killing space rock—and it did. And NASA’s Artemis mission may have had a little trouble getting off the ground, but once it did the rocket traveled more than 1.4 million miles on a path around the Moon—blowing by a record last set by the crew of Apollo 13.

When it comes to international space policy, we have also seen big changes. Last April, the Vice President announced that, for the first time, the United States was committing not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing, and that we would seek to establish this as a new international norm for responsible behavior in space. We made good on that promise. In December, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a ban on kinetic anti-satellite missile tests. The resolution was sponsored by the United States and 155 countries voted in support.

We have also seen satellites and space policy taking center stage as new challenges remake the globe. Conflict in Ukraine has, with good reason, removed Russia from international space partnerships. Meanwhile, China has continued to allow debris from its satellite launches to fall back uncontrollably to Earth as it aggressively seeks to expand its space systems. But we also see the heroic way that the satellite industry has helped in the aftermath of the tragic earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, where communications and images from the skies are supporting first responders, humanitarian organizations, and others involved in relief efforts on the ground.

So let me pause for a minute to take stock. We have new satellite space policies, asteroid strikes, moon missions, and support for disaster recovery—by any measure that is a lot.

Back to the FCC. We are developing the Space Bureau with all of this other activity ongoing and it’s really exciting. But we are not new to this. Because it was more than sixty years ago that the FCC assisted with the very first commercial communications satellite launched into space—known as Telstar 1. Now more than six decades later, we have the opportunity to ensure that our practices at the agency can help support this new era of satellites and the broader space economy. And we are going to seize it.

Beyond just reorganizing the agency for this new world, we have made real policy changes as part of our Space Innovation Agenda. We have kicked off efforts to streamline our rules to expedite the processing of new satellite and earth station applications and to promote new spectrum sharing opportunities. We have updated our approach to orbital debris to care for our skies so that the space economy can support our grandest ambitions. And now looking ahead to the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference, we are going to promote United States leadership with satellite actions that broadcast to the world how important we believe this sector is to our future.

Last month, I spoke about this future at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. If you are familiar with this event, you may know it is a global gathering of experts focused on how we use wireless spectrum to communicate. Now the people who attend this conference are usually looking down. By that I mean they are focused on what is possible with terrestrial networks.

They are not thinking about what is happening in space. So I used my remarks to do something different. Instead of talking about what is happening on the ground I asked them to look up. Because we are fast heading to a world where next-generation connectivity will connect everyone and everything around us. And to get there requires policymakers to think beyond just terrestrial systems and embrace combining those efforts with the ones emerging in our skies.

When I spoke, I asked everyone who was present to imagine that they were no longer in Spain, but instead in the Angeles National Forest in California. This is land that is nestled between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Sierra Pelona Mountains. That puts it just north of Los Angeles, a wilderness area that is a retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The landscapes here are pretty amazing, but the topography makes it difficult to get a consistent wireless signal. Back in December, a couple was traveling in this area and their car ran off the road. In fact, it fell 300 feet from the Angeles Forest Highway. This is a really remote area. There was no cell service. No one would have known to look for them. Plus, this is the kind of environment that—beautiful as it is—gets really treacherous at night, when the temperatures drop to dangerous levels.

Now this story could have happened in lots of places. And it could have ended for this couple right there, but it did not. They survived, with some grit, some luck, and some new technology. They had a phone that had a new feature: the ability to connect directly to satellite signals delivered from space. A help message reached first responders with their exact location. Within 30 minutes, a rescue helicopter was airlifting the couple to a hospital.

What is so striking about this story is that it demonstrates how bringing satellite and terrestrial wireless capabilities together can accomplish what neither network can do on its own. We are starting to see how this kind of direct satellite-to-smartphone communication has moved from sci-fi fantasy to real-world prospect. Because we have so many small startups, big operators, handset providers, and software companies that have announced new plans to connect satellites directly to our devices so that we always stay connected.

For now, it is important to remember that these early space communications projects will not provide high-speed broadband from the stratosphere to our phones. But to start, they could deliver low-bandwidth connectivity suitable for emergency calls and texts in remote settings where terrestrial networks do not reach.

For this innovation to have a chance to deliver at scale—and to deliver with more providers, in more spectrum bands, and with a global footprint—I believe regulators will need to develop frameworks that support its development.

At the FCC, we are getting this effort started right now. This week, we will vote on a new regulatory framework to support direct satellite-to-smartphone communications. Our approach is designed to make it easier for satellite operators collaborating with terrestrial providers to obtain authorization for converged services. Along the way, we will consider what steps we need to take to protect spectrum rights and avoid harmful interference. By providing clear rules, I believe we can kick start more innovation in the space economy while also

expanding wireless coverage in remote, unserved, and underserved areas. We can make mobile dead zones a thing of the past. But even better, we have an opportunity to bring our spectrum policies into the future and think about how we move past the binary choices between mobile spectrum on the one hand or satellite spectrum on the other. That means we can reshape the airwave access debates of old and develop new ways to get more out of our spectrum resources.

I believe this is the first regulatory framework of its kind anywhere in the world. Like I said at the start, we are going to lead.

So let me end where I began. Here's to 24 years of the Annual Leadership Dinner. And here's to a future that is going to be even brighter. Because with the opportunities we have to update and improve satellite policy in the United States, we are going to be stronger, more connected, and more safe. So let's get to it.

Thank you.