

**REMARKS OF
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
AT THE SATELLITE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
25TH ANNUAL LEADERSHIP DINNER
WASHINGTON, DC
MARCH 18, 2024**

Good evening, SIA. It's great to be speaking at your Annual Leadership Dinner for the second year in a row. Thank you for inviting me back because this is the big one. It's your 25th anniversary.

A quarter of a century ago, when you were just getting up and running, not everyone in technology was looking to our skies. In fact, many of us were looking down at computer code, fixing legacy programming so that we could ward off what was looming with Y2K. Remember that? But 25 years ago, you saw something in the growing space economy and decided it was time to organize. This was the year that Cape Canaveral pad 41, the site of many military satellite launches, came tumbling down. But new commercial rockets went up and in-space repair took a leap forward when astronauts installed gyroscopes on the Hubble Space Telescope. 25 years ago, we also had a big first, when astronaut Eileen Collins became the first woman to lead a mission into Earth orbit. A little less momentous, it was 25 years ago I took my first job at a desk at the Federal Communications Commission. But now, a quarter of a century later I am the first woman confirmed to lead the agency in its history.

So it is a special honor to celebrate with you tonight. Even better, I get to share the stage with Doreen Bogdan Martin. She is the first female Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union. A lot of firsts! More importantly, you should know she recently did a masterful job presiding over the World Radiocommunication Conference in Dubai, a forum where so many satellite issues are at stake.

Now closer to home, last week at this time I was in Austin, Texas. I was there to speak at South by Southwest. For the uninitiated, South by Southwest is the eclectic cultural festival that somehow manages to mix film premiers, music shows, and discussions with policy types like yours truly. This is a crowd that is looking to be wowed. They want to hear about the next big thing. So when my office sat down with event organizers to identify what I should talk about, the answer quickly emerged. I should talk about satellites and the new space age.

Anyone who has been following the news closely would understand why.

Let's just start with the biggest headline. We just landed an American spacecraft on the moon for the first time in over 50 years! How cool is that?

For the FCC, this one was special. Our new Space Bureau, which got up and running a year ago to help modernize our approach to satellite technology and support the new space economy, just started issuing licenses for lunar communications. In fact, this robotic lunar lander was our very first lunar license. The company that made the lander was also a first-time FCC licensee. That's incredible. It's a reminder that the new space age is growing fast. It's also a reminder that old truths still apply because one lesson I see again and again at the FCC is that every industry we oversee is stronger when it has competition. So when we set up the Space Bureau, we worked hard to invite new entrants. That's why we started our new Transparency

Initiative, encouraging new innovators and investors to work with us as they develop space technologies. It's nice to see evidence this approach is working.

Other space stories in recent weeks may not have received as much attention as the moon landing, but they deserve celebrating, too. So let me highlight some of my favorites because they show how expansive our interest in space—and space communications—has become.

Consider that two weeks ago an environmental non-profit launched a satellite—which again, the FCC licensed—to track methane emissions at global scale. Methane emissions account for 30 percent of global warming. This satellite will communicate all kinds of data measuring pollution. It could be a game changer in our efforts to combat climate change.

Last year, I spent time at Kennedy Space Center with NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. Their labs introduced me what we may be able to do in a zero-gravity environment, assisted by satellites. So much of our discussion was about the potential to produce semiconductors in space. But just last month, we saw something more—a paper describing what it would be like to manufacture medicines in space and develop new pharmaceuticals in a weightless environment.

Speaking about recent developments, I would be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge the other big news about satellites so far this year. As multiple outlets have reported, and senior government officials have confirmed, Russia is pursuing the capacity to strike at United States satellites from space. At the same time, China has made no secret about its ambitions to grow its space capabilities and exceed our own.

It has become clearer than ever before that leadership in the skies is essential for global leadership in the 21st century. Thanks to so many of the people in this room, the United States—with its vast and growing space economy—is already leading the way. But when it comes to the capability of our satellite networks, to stand still is to lose ground.

So here's my pledge to you. The FCC will do everything in its power to make sure the United States continues to set the pace in space—both for our economy and our national security.

The good news is that is exactly what we have been doing. At the start, I mentioned how for the first time ever the FCC now has a Space Bureau. And month after month when the agency holds its big public meetings, we have featured new initiatives from the Space Bureau.

We kicked off the new year by providing more guidance to operators on orbital debris. Today more than 10,000 satellites are in orbit, and applications for more than five times that many satellites are pending before the FCC. Look at those numbers. We can no longer afford to launch new satellites into our skies without being thoughtful about space sustainability. Because the more abandoned junk we have in orbit the more likely we have collisions that destroy satellite communications and drag down the space economy. That is why the FCC has new policies to limit orbital debris. Simply put, if we authorize you to send something up into our skies, you must have a plan to take it back down. And if you fail to do so, penalties will follow.

Next, the FCC adopted a proposal to support in-space servicing, assembly, and manufacturing—or ISAM—to make sure new activities that take place in space can also communicate in space. Remember a minute ago I spoke about manufacturing medicines and semiconductors in space? These are the kind of opportunities this ISAM framework will foster, and, if we do it right, we can help build new industries that expand our scientific frontiers.

Then, just last week, the FCC voted to create a spectrum framework for supplemental coverage from space. This will make it easier for satellite operators to partner with wireless carriers so our smartphones can stay connected through satellites when there is no signal on the ground. We are doing this because we understand that combining space-based networks and terrestrial wireless networks can accomplish more together than either can do on its own. Together they have the power to end dead zones. Plus, our networks will be more resilient and communications more available whenever disaster strikes. This is a big deal.

We are the first regulators to adopt this framework; it is the first of its kind in the world. Take that in for a second. In the United States, we were the first to land on the moon and now we are the first to clear the way for the combination of terrestrial and space-based communications. It may seem nothing like the giant leap forward that Neil Armstrong described, but its consequences are no less profound. Because it is one small and meaningful step toward the Single Network Future.

Let me explain what I mean. In the Single Network Future, we will connect everyone, everywhere. But to do it we can't limit ourselves to using only one technology. We are going to need it all—fiber networks, licensed terrestrial wireless systems, next-generation unlicensed wireless technology, and satellite broadband, seamlessly interacting in a way that is invisible to the user. To be clear, this vision does not work without satellites. The way I see it, satellites may be in our skies, but they are the anchor tenant in our communications future.

I don't know that anyone was imagining this 25 years ago. But looking back it is extraordinary how much progress we have seen in the satellite industry. It is even more awe-inspiring to see where we have yet to go.

I want the FCC to continue to lead the way. I want the FCC to help set the global standard for communications in the new space age. And I know that we won't be able to do it without working closely with the people in this room. Thank you, SIA. Now let's go make some history—together.