REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR AT
THE U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GLOBAL AEROSPACE SUMMIT

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Thank you to the Chamber for the opportunity to be with you this afternoon. It's an honor to join so many distinguished government and industry officials that are leading the way on aerospace policy and innovations.

Many of the goals and topics discussed across these next few days fit exactly with the agenda we are running at the Federal Communications Commission. In fact, the Commission and its talented staff are working hard every day to help promote U.S. leadership across this and many other sectors of our economy. Our plan for doing so is what I call our Build America Agenda.

I had the chance to roll this agenda out a few months ago out in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It is all about empowering our country's innovators to create, our entrepreneurs to take risks, and our workers to build—whether that means building out new fiber lines across rural America or the rockets and satellites that are so vital to our aerospace industries.

As I outlined when I first unveiled our Build America Agenda, the plan centers on six core objectives. But I want to focus my remarks today on just one key pillar: Boosting America's space economy.

As so many of you know, we are living through a new wave of innovation and growth in this sector. As a result, we now have new constellations of low-earth satellites that make it possible to deliver high-speed internet to remote locations and connect Americans who have been stuck on the wrong side of the Digital Divide. And the potential of direct-to-cell (D2C) technology promises a fundamental shift in how we think about competition, connectivity, and convergence.

We have seen it as AST has started to roll out its new D2C satellite system. And we saw it again just yesterday, when SpaceX announced that it would purchase EchoStar's AWS-4 spectrum for $19 billion to support a new D2C satellite constellation. That deal is a potential gamechanger for the American consumer—it promises to light up new spectrum and bring new sources of competition to the wireless and connectivity market. I want our policies to promote disruptive competition at scale while bringing underused spectrum to bear for the American consumer.

I know this sector is ready to deliver. America's space economy is already creating new, good-paying jobs all across the country. Since I became Chairman, communications and government officials alike have invited me to ribbon-cuttings marking the expansion of satellite businesses in their home states. I've been to Covington, Louisiana with House Majority Leader Steve Scalise; Midland, Texas with Senator Ted Cruz; and Leesburg, Virginia with Governor

Glenn Youngkin. At each stop, there was a pervasive sense of optimism that there would be more expansions and more jobs in the future.

Space-based innovation promises new medical breakthroughs, too. U.S. companies are using the microgravity setting of space to formulate new cures to cancer that would be impossible on earth. I saw this firsthand on a visit out to El Segundo when Varda Space Industries showed me one of their spacecraft that went into orbit and back to test their out-of-this-world manufacturing process.

These opportunities are reason enough to go all-in on space innovation. So are the geopolitical challenges.

We are effectively in a Space Race 2.0. And, in this version, our main competitor is the government of China. China has invested heavily in two constellation networks with plans to deploy over 27,000 satellites between them. For context, there are now somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000 satellites in low-earth orbit. China is aggressively marketing their new satellite broadband services globally, and claims to be in negotiations with dozens of countries. The big worry isn't that U.S. companies might lose market share to Chinese competitors. The problem is that we know from the Great Firewall of China that they use technology to control information flow and heavily censor. If you go online in China or use their AI tool Deepseek and ask what happened in Tiananmen Square, they'll tell you it was a wonderful day. How are the Uyghurs doing? Well, China wants you to know that they are enjoying a new educational experience in a camp like setting. A world where the CCP is providing internet access and controlling the access of information to billions across the globe would be less prosperous and more dangerous.

The FCC recognizes the opportunities and challenges that come with this Space Race 2.0, and we are treating it with the urgency it deserves.

Big picture, our goal is to make sure that the United States is the most friendly regulatory environment in the world for people to start, grow, or accelerate their space operations.

Our efforts on this front will be driven by a few guiding principles: speed, simplicity, security, and satellite spectrum abundance. I am pleased to report that the FCC is already making significant progress in all of these areas.

On speed, it's been remarked over the years that it could take less time to build and launch entire new satellite systems than it does to shuffle paperwork through the government's review process. Now add the fact that we're seeing a massive uptick in the number of satellite launches to the tune of one every 28 hours, and it becomes clear that we can't stick with the old process designed for a much smaller scale.

At the FCC, we are changing the way we do business, and we're clearing out satellite application backlogs and reducing processing times at a record pace. Back in January, for instance, we had roughly 1,450 earth station applications pending before the Commission. Today, we've already cut that backlog in half, and we keep chipping away.

Of course, a big way to improve our speed is simplicity. And on this front, we're working to eliminate unnecessary rules that throttle the satellite industry.

Part of that is reducing paperwork that piles up because of unnecessary filings. Making the smallest change to a satellite system or earth station can require a new FCC approval. So, we eliminated FCC approval requirements for a range of routine changes that pose no risk to the public. One of our reforms will eliminate roughly half of earth station modification applications. Through these and other streamlining improvements, the FCC will hold itself accountable to more predictable timelines, such as a 30-day shot clock for earth station renewal applications.

Eliminating unnecessary paperwork doesn't just improve efficiency—it kickstarts American innovation. In particular, our reforms promise to boost an emerging business model—Ground-Station-as-a-Service—that allows multiple satellite systems to share the same ground station. This neutral-host infrastructure model has already proven to be successful in the wireless industry. By sparing companies the time and money to build their own bespoke infrastructure, we believe Ground-Station-as-a-Service can provide a similar boost for space startups.

Sometimes simplifying our rules means updating them. In our effort to overhaul outdated regulations, we found that next-generation satellite systems were still being governed by rules adopted over 30 years ago. The power limits developed in the 1990s to protect geostationary satellite systems from interference hamper today's satellite broadband offerings by degrading signal quality, reducing coverage, limiting capacity, and making it harder to share spectrum with other satellite systems. That's why we are taking a fresh look at this decades-old spectrum sharing regime between geostationary and non-geostationary satellites, to supercharge next-generation systems.

On security, a little over a week ago, a plane carrying the President of the European Commission had its GPS navigation jammed as it tried to land in Bulgaria. In the United States, we are particularly vulnerable to such an attack, because we don't have a backup system for GPS. That's why we launched a proceeding that looks at bolstering and safeguarding the services provided by our GPS system.

On satellite spectrum abundance, I spoke earlier about the massive infusion of spectrum into direct-to-cell offerings through the sale of AWS-4. Beyond that, we've opened a rulemaking that could free up more than 20,000 megahertz for satellite broadband. Specifically, we're looking at the upper 12 GHz band, the 42 GHz band, the 52 GHz band, and the W-Band. Constellations in the W-Band will operate at the cutting edge of physics, and this is the one where we are hopeful that American innovation will truly shine. I know that got into the technical weeds and might be a bit wonky, but I think this audience can handle it.

Not to tip my hand, but I would add that all of this is just the beginning. We will continue to take the necessary steps to inject rocket fuel into the space economy, and be on the lookout for new announcements in the not-to-distant future.

I'll close with this. Earlier I spoke about China's bold ambitions for this Space Race 2.0. So far, their progress has fallen far short of their propaganda. Recall those two Chinese companies I mentioned that are looking to put 27,000 satellites into orbit? Well, as of two months ago, they had combined to launch just 120. A big reason is that they haven't figured out reusable rockets and still rely on single-use ones. Meanwhile, SpaceX's Starlink has over 8,000 satellites in operation and Amazon's Project Kuiper has already put 129 satellites into orbit this year, with 80 more launch missions in the queue.

So here's the point I will leave you with. I am optimistic because I am betting on you. Thanks to America's innovators and entrepreneurs, the United States is not only winning this Space Race 2.0, we are dominating it. But to borrow a rocket analogy, we are not through Max Q just yet. We need to keep powering on. We need to go all-in on space innovation to make the gap between the U.S. and China so wide that we assure American leadership in this vital growing sector for not just years, but decades to come. I pledge to you that the FCC will do everything in its power to make sure the U.S. sets the pace in the new Space Race.

Thank you.