

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL O'RIELLY**

Re: *Streamlining Licensing Procedures for Small Satellites*, IB Docket No. 18-86.

I approve of today's notice that should promote innovation and entrepreneurship by facilitating and streamlining the launch of small satellites, such as CubeSats. Over the past year, the Commission has witnessed impressive advancements in satellite technologies. From NGSO constellations and next-generation geos, to impressive space launch capabilities, we are witnessing the proliferation of systems providing faster broadband speeds, engaging in earth observation, and pushing the envelope of scientific research. Hopefully, this proceeding will lead to future inventions and services that we cannot envision today.

This item's focus on smaller systems and shorter-term projects should promote such research and development, along with the marketing of new services. As proposed, the streamlined processes would be available for applications involving ten or fewer satellites with a life cycle of five years or less. As we go forward, we must be clear about which entities will be able to utilize these streamlined procedures and be careful that we do not create unintentional loopholes that could give some entities a competitive advantage over others.

Further, with this proceeding comes added responsibilities. We must ensure that the increased use of small sats does not cause harmful interference to other services. This an issue we have been faced with and have not adequately resolved in the context of NGSOs and in-line interference.

As I have discussed before, we also need a better plan to address orbital debris and dead satellites so that we do not clutter space with such things as used rocket parts. Therefore, we must make certain that these small sats will not cause damage to other satellites and that they de-orbit appropriately at the end of life.

Generally, the Commission must consider orbital debris when contemplating satellite rules going forward. Other federal agencies are working on best practices, and industry and governments are working on ways to clean up space, including such ideas as launching nets and harpoons to snag pieces of space trash as they fly by.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that there may be more than 650,000 objects larger than a fingernail and 170 million pieces larger than one millimeter.<sup>2</sup> This may not sound like much to some, but these objects can travel at speeds of up to 17,500 miles per hour, causing quite a bit of damage. While the FCC should not be regulating space debris, it should engage on this issue and do its part to ensure that its licensees are responsible stewards of the orbits surrounding the Earth. We certainly should ensure that we do not add to the problem. I look forward to discussing this issue with industry and other federal agencies in the coming months.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Clark, *Eliminating Space Junk Could Take Step Toward Reality with Station Cargo Launch*, SPACEFLIGHT NOW, Apr. 1, 2018, <https://spaceflightnow.com/2018/04/01/eliminating-space-junk-could-take-step-toward-reality-with-station-cargo-launch/>.

<sup>2</sup> Dave Mosher and Samantha Lee, *More than 14,000 Hunks of Dangerous Space Junk are Hurling Around Earth – Here's Who Put it All Up There*, BUSINESS INSIDER, Mar. 29, 2018, <http://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/space-junk-debris-amount-statistics-countries-2018-3-1019848316> (adding that the Space Surveillance Network tracks 23,000 objects larger than a softball and that 14,000 of these are uncontrolled).