

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

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

Last month marked the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. At 10:56 PM eastern time on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong descended from the lunar module and stepped onto the surface of the moon, uttering the immortal words: “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” It’s estimated that half a billion people watched that event live—one out of every seven people on Earth at the time. And this Commission played a small and often overlooked role in that historic moment. The FCC authorized and managed the communications between Apollo 11 and stations back on Earth that not only allowed the world to see Armstrong’s historic first steps, but also ensured that communications with NASA’s Houston center remained intact.

In the intervening years, communications technology has gotten much smaller and much more powerful. Apollo’s guidance computer weighed about 70 pounds, and it had less computing power than a modern pocket calculator. The geostationary satellites of old were often as big as a school bus. Today, we’re seeing an uptick in launches of small satellites, or small sats, which are often so small you could fit one in the palm of your hand.

Now, it’s perfectly fine to be nostalgic about previous generations of technology. But our regulations need to move on. As technology evolves—as it gets smaller and more cost efficient—it is incumbent on us, as regulators, to ensure that our rules are “right sized”—that they are tailored to reflect the costs and impacts associated with new innovations. We’ve seen time and again that outdated regulations designed for the products and services of decades past can be a barrier to deploying the technology of the future. Back here at ground level, for instance, we saw that regulations designed for large macro towers threatened to stifle the deployment of new small cells and undermine U.S. leadership in 5G. So we exempted small wireless facilities from those regulatory procedures. And this one step helped enable the private sector in the U.S. to build out the world’s largest 5G network.

Similarly, the FCC’s part 25 approach for processing satellite applications was designed for the school bus-sized satellites that first launched decades ago. But that approach and its regulatory costs can prevent the business case for small sats from ever getting off the ground. So I’m glad that in today’s Order, we adopt a Rocket Docket for small sats. Our record shows that a streamlined process for small sats will encourage use cases from predicting crop yields with artificial intelligence to collecting data from sea vessels to aid in fishing operations.

By taking unnecessary regulatory costs out of the system, we can encourage investment and innovation in small sats while continuing to protect against harmful interference. An oversized regulatory burden should never be what stands between entrepreneurs and progress, so I’m pleased to support this Order. I want to thank the staffs of the International Bureau and the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau for their work on this item. It has my support.