

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL O'RIELLY**

Re: *Auction of Flexible-Use Service Licenses in the 3.7–3.98 GHz Band for Next-Generation Wireless Services; Notice and Filing Requirements, Minimum Opening Bids, Upfront Payments, and Other Procedures for Auction 107; Bidding in Auction 107 Scheduled to Begin December 8, 2020; AU Docket No. 20-25.*

Now that the 3.5 GHz priority access license, or PAL, auction is under way, it is time for the Commission to turn its attention to the next spectrum auction in its queue: the 3.7 to 3.98 GHz band, more commonly referred to as the C-Band. I have been pushing for the auction of this spectrum for years, and I thank the Chairman for finalizing the auction procedures to ensure the December auction remains on schedule. As I have said before, CBRS provides a foothold for mid-band spectrum for 5G, but the 280 megahertz available in the C-band auction will be the spectrum centerpiece that permits 5G to truly flourish and will solidify U.S. leadership in next-generation wireless technology. Moreover, this spectrum will bring the benefits of 5G not only to large metropolitan areas, but also to our more rural communities where other frequencies the Commission has made available, such as the millimeter waves, may be too costly to rely on for mobile broadband build out.

Most importantly, perhaps, this swath of spectrum will allow potential bidders to aggregate 20 megahertz licenses to create the larger channel blocks needed to truly meet 5G's full promise of faster speeds, greater capacity, and lower latency. I am pleased that changes were made, at industry's request, to modify the assignment round process to ensure the contiguity of licenses once the entire wireless portion of the band is cleared. Keeping a winning bidder's licenses together maximizes functionality and spectrum efficiency, while reducing harmful interference risks within the band.

Additionally, these licenses will be usable in tandem with the adjacent 3.5 GHz band frequencies, hopefully getting wireless providers closer to the 100 megahertz blocks that many seek for 5G. However, we know that the interest in mid-band spectrum is through the roof and more is still needed to meet overall demand.

The Commission – and the Administration – must focus its next efforts on the band just below those being auctioned currently. The 3.1 to 3.55 GHz spectrum is ideally placed and can be combined with the 3.5 and 3.7 GHz bands to meet our current needs. These frequencies are primarily used for federal government radar systems, and, as I wrote in a letter to the President earlier this year, we need the help of the Administration to impress upon the Department of Defense the importance of repurposing this spectrum. The upper 100 megahertz, which is the most promising and was considered years ago for reallocation, must finally be cleared, as should the adjacent 100 megahertz, 3.35 to 3.45 GHz. While the remainder of the band may be harder to clear, it must be studied for potential sharing.

In sum, the C-Band auction will be a great victory for American wireless consumers, but more needs to be done to prepare for our longer-term spectrum needs and create a spectrum pipeline for the future. I approve.