

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Unlicensed Use of the 6 GHz Band, Expanding Flexible Use in Mid-Band Spectrum Between 3.7 GHz and 24 GHz*, ET Docket No. 18-295 and GN Docket No. 17-183.

The COVID-19 pandemic may be the most challenging event of our generation. While health care workers and first responders help those suffering from the virus, grocery store and essential retail workers, bus drivers, transportation and delivery personnel all continue to perform their hard work so that we can get the goods and services we need.

For those listening to this meeting online, “social distancing” may mean working from home, distance learning for the kids, and videoconferencing to stay in touch with colleagues and loved ones. But for millions of Americans without broadband connections, the response to COVID-19 has meant isolation. It has meant weeks, if not months, without instruction for their kids. And it has meant hard decisions about whether to “tough out” troubling health issues or risk traveling to a doctor’s office or an emergency room.

The 6 GHz Report and Order, like the other items we discuss today, reflects an important aspect of the FCC’s role in bridging the digital divide. For many people without broadband at home, getting online means relying on shared or public Wi-Fi connections in their neighborhood, the library, or even the local fast-food place. I particularly remember my visit to the Larkin Street Youth Services center in San Francisco, where I heard from homeless teens about how they relied on the facility’s Wi-Fi service to stay connected.

Today’s decision to make 1200 megahertz in the 6 GHz band available for unlicensed use holds special promise for these Americans. Even for those who can’t afford the new equipment that will take advantage of the new spectrum and the latest iteration of Wi-Fi, speeds for their devices should increase as existing Wi-Fi traffic moves to the new spectrum. Low-income consumers purchasing discounted broadband plans will realize the full benefits of their subscriptions, as the Wi-Fi channels within their homes become less congested and data flows more freely. The new spectrum is also expected to spur new efforts by many broadband providers, retailers, restaurants, and others that offer free public Wi-Fi access at hotspots across the nation.

The benefits of this decision don’t stop there. The 6 GHz spectrum is expected to complement 5G wireless service and unleash a wave of innovation for the Internet of Things. It will allow doctors to conduct complex examinations and procedures remotely, enable the training of students and workers using virtual and augmented reality, and spur the next generation of streaming content and gaming.

Finally, I look forward to a rapid resolution of the issues presented in the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. In particular, I hope that we can quickly determine whether and how to increase the power levels for low-power indoor operations. Higher power levels will ensure people can connect to Wi-Fi throughout their homes without additional equipment that might be too costly or complicated for many Americans.

My special thanks to the Commission’s staff for their hard work resolving the complicated engineering issues presented here.