

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Expediting Initial Processing of Satellite and Earth Station Applications; Space Innovation*; IB Docket No. 22-411, IB Docket No. 22-271; Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (September 21, 2023)

When we proposed to streamline our satellite application rules just last December, I said that supporting U.S. leadership in commercial space meant moving at the speed of space-based innovation. I also said that it meant creating a path toward regulatory approval even for applications that propose something new—and perhaps even especially for systems that challenge the old playbook.

That’s why I’m pleased we’ve reached an order so quickly. That’s why I’m also pleased that we’ve set the right tone for the rest of this proceeding, and for the licensing process in general, by elevating accountability, practicality, and innovation.

In this item, we’re accelerating our process for reviewing satellite applications before we accept them for filing—and we’re providing timeframes for the FCC to complete that important process. That’s accountability.

At the same time, we’re eliminating outdated rules that led to time-consuming squabbles about what words like “unbuilt” mean without actually doing much to advance the public interest. We’re also committing to shed more daylight on the licensing process and to explain what our requirements mean for prospective licensees in practice. That’s practicality.

While we’re taking steps to accelerate licensing for *all* systems, we’re also removing specific hurdles that tend to slow down and deter applications for groundbreaking ones. Furthermore, we’re creating a new streamlined process for earth station applications with the hope of facilitating next-gen upgrades and new “as-a-service” business models. That’s innovation.

I’m also glad to see that we revised the item to advance these goals even more than the draft item already did. At my request, we’re no longer shutting the door to timeframes for deciding applications on the merits *after* they’re accepted for filing. In fact—at my colleague Commissioner Simington’s request—we’re committing to build a stronger record on whether and how we can do that in the Further Notice. We’re also more clearly conveying that while we must ensure new systems comply with our rules, we don’t intend to micromanage operators’ design choices—especially ones that are irrelevant to our jurisdiction. Finally, we’re taking steps to make our streamlined procedure for earth stations more practically useful.

This item is an important first step toward expedition, and my hope and expectation is that there will be much more to come. I thank the Space Bureau for its excellent work on this item, and for its Herculean efforts, day in and day out, to support space innovation.