

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Unlicensed Use of the 6 GHz Band, Expanding Flexible Use in Mid-Band Spectrum Between 3.7 and 24 GHz*; ET Docket No. 18-295, GN Docket No. 17-183; Second Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (October 19, 2023)

We opened the 6 GHz band to unlicensed devices at a unique moment in American history. It was April 2020. Wi-Fi had emerged as a lifeline of connectivity in places like libraries, restaurants, parking lots, and youth centers. Internet usage had morphed and surged, sparking a new sense of urgency to ensure that our networks—including our home networks—could keep pace with demand. At the same time, new waves of IoT innovation began to grip sectors like healthcare and transportation. Consumer adoption also began to climb as newer and more affordable devices offered fresh ways to make life safer, more convenient, more enriching, and more efficient.

On all these fronts, 6 GHz unlicensed showed a vibrant path forward, from the wide-area to the local-area to the interconnectivity immediately around us. That’s why when we adopted our 2020 order, I spoke about the band’s potential to serve as a lynchpin for a more innovative, and more inclusive, wireless future.

I continue to share that vision for 6 GHz, and today’s action takes another important step towards achieving it. Wearable devices stand at the very leading edge of wireless innovation. They can power applications for everyday users, educators, medical professionals and, yes, gamers, too. But in 2023, consumers don’t want and shouldn’t have to put up with devices that are wired, clunky, or sluggish, or that overheat and need to constantly recharge. With VLP, they can benefit from products that are more capable, sleeker, and more power efficient, and that cost less to make and just plain work better.

This has been a long time coming, and I’m glad we got it done ahead of the upcoming World Radio Conference. Countries around the world are exploring the future of 6 GHz within their borders. As today’s action shows, the promise of 6 GHz unlicensed goes well beyond the millions of Wi-Fi 6E devices that have shipped already. And it will only continue to build as the ecosystem matures and develops.

The incumbents in this band provide vital services, and making sure we protect their operations is critical. That’s why we’ve taken a conservative first step with VLP power levels as we continue to build a record on future possibilities. Speaking of which, I hope we continue to explore our limits for low-power indoor devices, and that we do so quickly. As I said in 2020, raising power can help ensure that people can connect to Wi-Fi throughout their homes without additional equipment that might be too costly or complicated for many Americans. It also can help make 6 GHz networks less expensive to deploy for small businesses. The potential consumer impact here is big, and it’s real. Now, the engineering isn’t easy. But the time has come to work through the questions that remain, and see if we can come up with the right solutions.

I thank the Office of Engineering and Technology for its hard work on this item.