



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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Pallone: Administration Must Speed Up Process on Spectrum

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on “Facilitating the 21st Century Wireless Economy.”*

Thank you, Madam Chairman. This committee has a long and successful history of freeing up new frequencies for broadband. A few years ago, we passed legislation that led to the FCC’s incentive auction that just concluded last week. That auction cleared new airwaves for licensed services—the kind of frequencies purchased by nationwide wireless carriers—and for unlicensed services like Wi-Fi. The auction also brought in nearly \$20 billion dollars for the Treasury.

But to repeat these successes, we must all agree on the same set of underlying facts. And here are the facts:

- Mobile data will skyrocket 700 percent over the next five years;
- Wireless networks are already managing this onslaught by moving their data onto unlicensed wireless technologies like Wi-Fi. Just last year, more traffic was offloaded onto Wi-Fi than what stayed on the cellular parts of the network.
- Over the next five years, nearly half of all internet traffic—whether from a mobile phone, a desktop computer, or other connected devices—will travel over Wi-Fi.

The data speaks for itself—unlicensed airwaves are going to be more important than ever. Fortunately, the Senate bill we are considering today recognizes this and gets past the old ideological fights between licensed and unlicensed airwaves. It is critical that moving forward this Committee also recognize that successful spectrum policy must identify both unlicensed and licensed frequencies.

Under the Obama administration, we were able to make an unprecedented amount of frequencies available for the American public. Unfortunately, with the completion of the incentive auction, this administration risks slowing the pipeline of new airwaves in traditional frequencies down to a trickle.

This committee needs to find ways to prime the pump. The Senate bill we are considering today is a good start, but I think we can do more. We should direct the administration to make hundreds of more megahertz available for licensed and unlicensed uses.

But we should not stop there because identifying new frequencies is not enough. We must also find ways to increase the pressure and speed the flow of new airwaves to the market once they have been identified. If we identify new spectrum today, it could take almost a decade before it can benefit the American people. That's simply too long—especially at the rate of current wireless developments. We are not responding to people's demands for more mobile services. This committee needs to examine the administration's processes and we need to ask what we can do to speed the process up.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

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