

Opening Statement
Subcommittee Chairman Mike Doyle
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Repurposing the C-Band to Benefit All Americans”
October 29, 2019

Thank you all for being here today, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us.

Today the Subcommittee is holding an important legislative hearing entitled “Repurposing the C-Band to Benefit all Americans.”

The C-Band is a block of spectrum currently used by satellite companies for the long-distance distribution of cable and broadcast video programming like NBC, ESPN, and HBO – as well as audio programming like NPR and LDS radio. More than a hundred million Americans receive content every day that is distributed through this band.

More than two years ago, C-Band satellite providers began to suggest that they could relinquish a portion of the band in exchange for incentive payments, and that in turn the spectrum could be used for 5G mobile wireless.

In the wake of the incentive auction, it is good to see incumbent spectrum rights-holders come forward and offer to work with the government to free up spectrum. I think that tells us that the incentive model can work.

However, a number of these incumbent satellite companies have come together to propose a private transaction in the band whereby they sell the rights to spectrum they didn’t purchase, and that they keep the lion’s share of the profits, and that they may – MAY - give some money back to the US Treasury on a voluntary basis.

There is a lot about this proposal that is deeply concerning. I have seen a number of reports that suggest that auctioning this spectrum could raise \$60 billion or more.

This spectrum is so valuable because it will be essential for our nation’s deployment of 5G services.

It has the capacity and propagation characteristics to usher in a new era of innovation and economic opportunity.

We need to get this right, because this is a precious national resource, and the way this spectrum is deployed in the marketplace will determine our nation’s wireless future.

That is why last week, I introduced H.R 4855, the Clearing Broad Airwaves for New Deployment Act or the C-Band Act, along with my colleagues, Subcommittee Vice Chair Doris Matsui, who is a leader on this issue and with whom I have been working closely, Congressman Bill Johnson, and Congressman Greg Gianforte.

This legislation would require the FCC to hold a public auction and to sell between 200 and 300 Megahertz of C-Band spectrum.

It would require the Commission to protect incumbent C-Band-dependent users who rely on this service to provide millions of Americans with video and radio services.

And it requires the Commission to clear this spectrum and sell it within 3 years.

This legislation would also create a golden opportunity to raise revenue and pay for many of our shared priorities.

We can fix the problems we have talked about for a decade – such as rural broadband deployment, which I know my colleagues Mr. Johnson and Mr. Gianforte care about, rural tele-health, public safety communications, next generation 911, digital opportunity and inclusion, and closing the digital divide.

We have the opportunity with this legislation to address these critical needs.

Or we can do nothing and tell our constituents we gave away \$60 billion to a handful of foreign satellite companies and left the folks back home high and dry.

That doesn't sound like 'America first' to me!

There are no other sources of revenue on the horizon to pay for these priorities, and as we have talked about time and time again, these are not problems private sector actors have an incentive to address on their own.

Now, I don't normally associate myself with the comments of groups like the Taxpayer Protection Alliance or Citizens Against Government Waste, which I am happy to see is testifying here today.

But at the Senate Appropriations hearing two weeks ago. Mr. Williams, the President of TPA described the CBA plan for a private sale as one of the top ten taxpayer rip-offs he has ever seen – up there with the 'bridge to nowhere!'

The C-band legislation we have introduced is a win-win for all Americans. It will ensure that this band is auctioned in a transparent and accountable fashion that results in the maximum return for the American people.

It also ensures that the incumbent services that over a hundred million Americans rely on continue to operate and are protected through a transition.

And finally it gives us the opportunity and the ability to address critical needs in our country and close the digital divide.

I encourage all my colleagues to support the C-Band Act and I look forward to today's discussion on this important issue.

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