

Question for the Record for Whitney Q. Lohmeyer following the February 8, 2023 Hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

March 10, 2023

Question from the Honorable Earl L. “Buddy” Carter

Have regulatory barriers at the FCC and NTIA contributed to the current digital divide due to how difficult it is to license a satellite system? Has it delayed connectivity in remote parts of the country?

The FCC’s licensing system has not delayed satellite connectivity in remote parts of the country, nor has it actively contributed to the current digital divide. However, the system and lack of available spectrum for satellite operations (in UHF and S-band) has caused operators to consider filing off-shore through overseas administrations.

To elaborate, the FCC has inherited a processing round approach that has challenges given the unprecedented volume and complexity of today’s satellite networks. Since 2016, more than twenty-entities have filed for more than 70,000 satellites for NGSO FSS spectrum alone¹. Chairwoman Rosenworcel proactively established the Space Bureau to address the increasingly long wait-times and lack of clarity in the current satellite licensing process. Now, it is imperative that Congress ensures the Commission’s Space Bureau has adequate support and resources (staffing, data, training, equipment, etc.), so that they can methodically and intentionally define policies and license systems. Inadequate and tardy support for the Space Bureau could threaten our nation’s leadership in this sector and the space situational awareness of our planet.

¹ See A. Kriezis and W. Q. Lohmeyer, U.S. Market Access Authorization Timeline Analysis for Megaconstellation Networks, OSSTP (Apr, 2022), <https://www.osstp.org/fcc-analysis>