

Question for the Record from Rep. Anna Eshoo
Response of Clete D. Johnson
April 13, 2023

Question:

Each witness at the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology hearing entitled, “Defending American’s Wireless Leadership” on March 10, 2023, testified to the increasing demand for spectrum and the balance that must be made between federal and commercial uses. The Departments of Commerce and Defense have agreed to a process that allows for an ongoing and thorough study examining the potential impact of opening 3 GHz spectrum to commercial use on existing Federal missions.

For the record, please indicate whether you support the position of the Department of Commerce and Department of Defense regarding spectrum auction authority and spectrum availability as described in the enclosed letter dated March 5, 2023.

Johnson response:

As I testified to the subcommittee on March 10, 2023, I believe that U.S. leadership in wireless communications is a strategic imperative for the future of market democracy and therefore for the security of the United States. Spectrum availability for commercial wireless – particularly lower 3GHz and other mid-band spectrum that is ideal for 5G deployments – is indispensable to that leadership, and spectrum auction authority is indispensable to that spectrum availability.

The United States and our allies are the greatest source of technological innovation and economic vitality in human history. That is the reason we have the most advanced weapons and the most powerful military in the world. It is the reason we won World War II and the Cold War. It is the reason we are presently leading the global 5G economy – even as we are hamstrung by disputes between agencies that have slowed 5G deployment and dried up the spectrum pipeline.

The world’s future will be determined by whether the U.S.’s model of competitive, expansive free market democracy can harness human ingenuity and progress to prevail over the command-and-control, restrictive structures of authoritarian governments. As the foundational, enabling technology upon which myriad technology innovations of our near and distant future rely, and as the most secure communications network in history, 5G networks will be a bellwether for how our societies – governments, businesses, citizens – fare in the face of authoritarian impulses. Therefore, we need more spectrum available for commercial use, which depends on spectrum auction authority. We need coherent processes for commercial wireless deployments. We need global harmonization of spectrum bands so the United States is not an island.

This is crucial to our national security. If we do this, we will ensure the economic and technological vibrancy that has always undergirded our military strength and edge in weaponry – particularly in a future in which AI, quantum computing, and cyber capabilities will predominate in military defense and force projection. And in doing so, we will secure the United States and our allies as market democracies. This is an existential national security issue.