

Promoting Spectrum Policies that Serve the Public

Wireless companies and others claim that the current amount of spectrum, or airwaves, allocated for high-speed wireless Internet service are not sufficient to meet the expected increase in consumer demand over the next few years. These companies have urged the federal government to reallocate spectrum for future wireless use.

When the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) staff released its National Broadband Plan, it reflected these arguments, calling for the reallocation of spectrum, including airwaves currently used by local television broadcasters.

The FCC was granted authority from Congress in February 2012 to hold spectrum incentive auctions to accomplish this goal. This legislation includes a number of provisions supported by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) to ensure that viewers who rely on local television continue to receive their existing services and new broadcast innovations on the horizon.

History

In March 2010, the FCC presented the National Broadband Plan to Congress. The plan recommended the reallocation of 500 MHz of spectrum for wireless broadband use, with 120 MHz, or 20 channels, coming from the spectrum currently allocated to local television broadcasting. In late 2010, the FCC released a rulemaking notice that represented the first major step in efforts to implement recommendations made in the National Broadband Plan.

The FCC has not yet released details or analysis of how a reallocation of broadcast spectrum followed by a repacking of the TV band would affect local stations and viewers.

According to a thorough analysis by NAB's chief engineers, to clear 20 TV channels as called for in the National Broadband Plan, 40 percent of full power local television stations in the U.S. would have to vacate their current TV channel assignment, and a minimum of 210 of those stations would go off the air permanently.

The NAB analysis found that 672 of the nation's 1,735 full-power TV stations must be "cleared" from channels 31-51 to accommodate the FCC's goal of reclaiming an additional 120 MHz of spectrum from broadcasters. During the analog-to-digital TV transition completed in 2009, only 174 stations had to be cleared from channels 52-69 and forced to move to a new channel.

There was concern that if the FCC's National Broadband Plan was implemented without the proper viewer protections, service disruption, confusion and inconvenience for local television viewers could dwarf the consumer impact of the 2009 DTV transition.

To protect local TV viewers, when Congress passed legislation providing the FCC with spectrum incentive auction authority in February 2012, it included the following provisions:

- Signal contour protections to ensure local TV stations can continue to reach the same viewers and geographic areas;
- No forced moves from UHF to VHF, which maintains local TV stations' ability to innovate and provide new services for viewers in the future;
- A one-time auction and a relocation fund of \$1.75 billion to offset costs incurred by local stations that are "repacked" following an auction; and
- Language guaranteeing continued viewer access to TV station signals along the Canadian and Mexican borders.

(See reverse)



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NAB Position

NAB supports a truly voluntary spectrum incentive auction and was pleased that appropriate viewer protections were included in legislation authorizing the auction.

NAB will continue to work closely with Congress and the FCC to implement an incentive auction program that does not jeopardize viewers' access to broadcasters' critical services.

Action Needed

Congress should exercise strong oversight as the FCC implements spectrum incentive auction legislation to ensure local TV viewers are not harmed.

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