

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER

Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet Hearing: H.R. 3125, The Radio Spectrum Inventory Act and H.R. 3019, The Spectrum Relocation Improvement Act of 2009

December 15, 2009

Today the Subcommittee convenes a legislative hearing on two measures related to the availability of the wireless spectrum which is essential to meeting our future needs for mobile communications services.

The movement of personal communications to mobile services is dramatic and accelerating. Earlier this year, it was announced that for the first time the number of homes having only a cell phone and no landline service now exceeds the number of homes having only a landline and no cellular service. At the end of 2008, there were approximately 270 million wireless subscribers in the United States, including an estimated 40 million active users of mobile Internet services.

Daily, new, attractive and useful applications are added to wireless services, and data rates continue to increase as consumers require faster access to mobile applications. As more and more Americans use data-intensive smartphones and as services like mobile video emerge, the demand for spectrum to support these applications and devices will grow dramatically.

Today the Subcommittee continues its examination of possible ways in which federal telecommunications policy can be altered to meet these challenges with the goal of enhancing the consumer experience and facilitating the future growth of mobile services.

In July, I joined with Chairman Waxman, full Committee Ranking Member Barton and Subcommittee Ranking Member Stearns in introducing H.R. 3125, the Radio Spectrum Inventory Act. This measure would direct the NTIA and the FCC to undertake a comprehensive survey of the nation's spectrum and develop an inventory of each spectrum band in the U.S. Table of Frequency Allocations between 225 megahertz and 10 gigahertz. The inventory would include the identity of Federal and non-Federal users and the types of services they offer in each spectrum band, and the amount of use of each band on a geographic basis.

When the inventory is completed, the NTIA and the FCC would create a website to make the inventory publicly available. They would report the results of the inventory to Congress. The report would include a description of information that could not be made publicly available for national security reasons. It would also include a recommendation of which, if any, of the least utilized blocks of spectrum should be reallocated for commercial uses. The creation of the inventory is an essential step in making available more spectrum for commercial and wireless services and meeting the extraordinary spectrum demands the nation will soon face.

I have also joined our colleagues Jay Inslee and Fred Upton in introducing the Spectrum Relocation Improvement Act. This measure would address an urgent need, which was brought to

light after the FCC auctioned the advanced wireless services spectrum in 2006. While that spectrum was auctioned more than three years ago, the winners of the commercial licenses still do not have full use of the spectrum because it has not been fully cleared of government users.

The bill would hasten the process of clearing Federal users from spectrum that the government has reallocated for commercial use. It would require the NTIA to publish the transition plan of each Federal entity to be relocated after a spectrum auction. It would also clarify the steps Federal spectrum users must take to receive payment for their relocation costs from the Spectrum Relocation Fund, including a requirement that the reallocation be completed within one year.

My goal is to move both the inventory legislation and bill speeding the reallocation of previously auctioned government spectrum through the Committee and through the House at the earliest possible time.

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us this morning. We look forward to your testimony on the future demand for wireless spectrum and the steps we should take to meet that demand.