

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Creating Opportunities through Improved Government Spectrum Efficiency”
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
September 13, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Walden, for holding this timely hearing on the role the federal government can play in easing our nation’s anticipated spectrum crunch. Since April, members of the bipartisan Federal Spectrum Working Group, led by Representatives Matsui and Guthrie, have met with federal agencies and industry stakeholders to explore opportunities for maximizing federal spectrum efficiency. Today’s hearing provides an opportunity for the entire subcommittee to discuss these issues.

I believe the Administration is appropriately pursuing an “all of the above” approach to make more spectrum available for commercial mobile services. In 2010, the President called for 500 megahertz of spectrum to be made available for mobile broadband. Since then, the Administration has already identified and begun freeing up over 400 megahertz of spectrum currently occupied by federal users.

With the Administration’s support, this Committee has also taken action to increase available spectrum. Working on a bipartisan basis, we passed legislation that authorizes the first-ever incentive auctions. Experts believe this new auction mechanism could clear up to 120 megahertz of underutilized broadcast television spectrum for commercial broadband services.

In preparation for this hearing, my staff spoke with several companies in the wireless industry to discuss options for utilizing federal spectrum better. I am pleased to hear that these companies report that there has been an unprecedented level of cooperation between federal and commercial stakeholders. In fact, one company told my staff that federal agencies have shared more information in the last two months than in the previous ten years.

This collaborative process must continue if we are to meet our shared goal for greater spectrum availability.

Many individuals have contributed to the progress we are making. I want to commend Mr. Nebbia, Major General Wheeler, Mr. Sharkey, and the other members of the Commercial

Spectrum Management Advisory Committee for their coordinated efforts to make more spectrum available to fuel wireless innovation and economic growth.

I also want to commend the effort by members of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) in authoring a forward-thinking report focused on "spectrum sharing" as a way to improve the use of underutilized federal spectrum. Given the looming spectrum crunch, I agree that we cannot afford to take any options off the table. Spectrum sharing is an innovative concept that should be part of a multi-pronged strategy going forward. I look forward to hearing more from Dr. Marshall on the work of PCAST.

When Congress passed the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, we made significant changes to the federal relocation process that created new incentives to encourage agencies to participate in the clearing or sharing of spectrum. Today we should explore whether there may be additional incentives that would encourage federal users to relinquish more underutilized spectrum. This could be a winning proposition for both the commercial and public sectors. Properly crafted, incentives can give federal users better tools to help fulfill their missions and ensure our nation's long-term spectrum needs are met.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.