



U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Spectrum Agreement Summary

The final public safety spectrum agreement is based on the fundamental framework Commerce Committee Chairman John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV first developed in his public safety spectrum bill. It has two essential elements. First, it provides public safety with D-Block spectrum for a nationwide, wireless, broadband network. Second, it provides the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with authority to hold new spectrum auctions, including voluntary incentive spectrum auctions

Public Safety:

D-Block. The agreement provides public safety officials across the country with the same spectrum resource—a portion of the 700 MHz wireless airwaves known as the D-Block.

Funding. The agreement provides \$7 billion in dedicated funding to get a nationwide, wireless, broadband network using the D-block spectrum up and running. This is accomplished through spectrum auction revenues—at no cost to taxpayers.

Public Safety Input. The agreement provides extensive opportunities for public safety input and leadership in the development, operation, and maintenance of the network.

Governance. The agreement will create an independent First Responders Network Authority to manage the public safety network. The authority will be housed within NTIA, but will have separate leadership, including a board with public safety, commercial, federal, state and local expertise to oversee the D-Block license and development of the network.

Leverages Commercial Networks. The agreement leverages existing commercial wireless networks to promote cost effective deployment of the network.

Efficiency from a National Model. To the extent that states do not want to participate in a national system, and believe they can develop their own interoperable systems, this model permits state efforts to develop radio access networks that use the national evolved packet core.

Research. The agreement provides up to \$300 million for R&D critical for the development of next generation public safety mission critical communications.

New Auctions for Commercial Spectrum at the FCC:

This legislation directs the FCC to auction underutilized government spectrum to commercial wireless providers. It also provides the agency with voluntary incentive auction authority, which will promote efficient spectrum use. These auctions will raise billions of dollars—to help fund the public safety network and also lower the deficit.

Eligibility to Participate in Auctions:

The FCC will be required to permit any interested entity to have the ability to bid in new spectrum auctions.

Protects Innovations in the Unlicensed White Spaces:

This agreement preserves the opportunity for nationwide unlicensed use of spectrum known as “white spaces,” while still maximizing the amount of spectrum that can be auctioned for commercial use. Unlicensed spectrum has been an engine of economic innovation and growth. Today, unlicensed uses include Wi-Fi connections for laptops, television remote controls, and cordless telephones. In the future, unlicensed spectrum is expected to enable new forms of communication, like Super Wi-Fi.