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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

March 2, 2022

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel,

With the emergence of next generation communications networks and innovative new wireless technologies, the demand for spectrum continues to grow. Finding ways to make sufficient spectrum available for commercial use is an ongoing challenge, particularly as the spectrum needs of Federal agencies are growing simultaneously. In recent years, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), under your leadership as well as that of former Chairman Ajit Pai, has auctioned hundreds of megahertz of valuable spectrum that is already being put to use to deploy 5G networks and connect Americans to the reliable, high performing wireless connectivity they have come to expect.

The United States' system of market-based competitive bidding for spectrum licenses through auctions has revolutionized the way our scarce spectrum resources are allocated. First authorized in 1993, the FCC has conducted more than one hundred spectrum auctions, which have generated hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue for the Treasury, helped fund major policy priorities such as a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network, and ensured that spectrum is put to the highest and best use. However, that authority granted to the FCC by Congress is set to expire September 30, 2022, unless Congress acts to extend the statutory authority.

As we look to the future of spectrum auctions, I request that you update the Committee on the ongoing work of the Commission as it relates to auctions. Please respond to the following questions to help inform our deliberations.

1. Congress has granted frequency-specific, extended statutory authority for auctions to the FCC in some instances. Please detail the specific auction authority the FCC will retain after the expiration of the general auction authority.
2. What spectrum auctions are pending or in the rulemaking process? When will those auctions be completed?
3. What statutory tools, beyond auction authority, do you believe would improve the FCC's ability to make additional spectrum available for auction in the future?

4. What specific frequencies, if any, do you believe are good candidates for auction that the FCC does not currently have the authority to conduct following the September 2022 expiration date?
5. What policy reforms can be made to spectrum auction rules to promote international competitiveness, maximize spectrum use efficiency, and foster the rapid deployment of next-generation technologies?

It is imperative that we continue to focus our efforts on creating a sustainable and predictable pipeline of spectrum for commercial and federal use in our country. This is a pivotal time in the development of next generation communications networks and the applications and use cases that will result. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to ensure the necessary and appropriate authorities are in place to promote effective utilization of spectrum.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
U.S. Senate



John Thune
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications, Media,
and Broadband
U.S. Senate