

April 28, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Unlicensed technologies and airwaves are at the heart of U.S. economic growth, innovation, education, and government. In the last decade, these technologies, led by Wi-Fi, have grown to become the dominant way that Americans access the Internet—carrying more data to consumers today than all other wireless broadband technologies combined.

But while Americans' dependence on unlicensed technologies for Internet access continues to skyrocket, the spectrum resources that power our devices are perilously insufficient. As a result, our Wi-Fi bands are becoming dangerously congested. The problem has become so severe that Cisco and Apple have recently warned customers that the core 2.4 GHz unlicensed band has become so overtaxed that it "is not considered suitable for use for any business and/or mission critical enterprise applications." We must act now to find more unlicensed spectrum.

We therefore strongly support your commitment to make available 500 MHz of additional licensed and unlicensed spectrum. We write today to identify the frequency band that is our nation's single best opportunity for addressing the unlicensed spectrum crisis—the 5.9 GHz band.

Our organizations do not often agree on policy matters. But we agree that the 5.9 GHz band is our country's best unlicensed spectrum opportunity for ensuring high-quality Internet access for the American public for three reasons:

- First, the band is uniquely large enough to support wireless innovation and investment, and occupies a low enough frequency range to support widespread consumer operations.
- Second, it is immediately adjacent to the existing 5.8 GHz unlicensed band, which already uses Wi-Fi to support millions of consumer devices and automotive functions for drivers today. The unlicensed use of this spectrum will drive down consumer equipment costs, and a combined 5.8/5.9 GHz band will allow the United States to deploy next-generation 160-MHz-wide gigabit Wi-Fi technologies, greatly increasing throughput and performance.
- Third, the band is essentially unutilized in the vast majority of the country. There is simply no other band with as few existing incumbents to protect. Government operations here are critical, but are far fewer than in other possible bands, and we are committed to protecting them. And while the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) permits certain Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)

devices in this band, there are no such systems available to consumers today, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has estimated that “it will likely take about 15 to 20 years before the vast majority of all vehicles on the road have the technology installed”¹—if not longer. That means that both Wi-Fi and Dedicated Short Range Communications can design their wireless operations with sharing built in from the beginning.

After fifteen years, ITS still has not made meaningful use of the band, and while some use may emerge, other technologies have developed over this time that have overtaken ITS in the marketplace. We therefore must ask whether subsidizing this yet-to-market commercial technology with spectrum—as allocated in 1999 before the advent of mobile broadband—and effectively preventing robust consumer Wi-Fi use of the band remains good public policy seventeen years later. Fortunately, there is still time for both Wi-Fi and ITS to design their wireless operations with sharing built in so the band can enable ITS and benefit Wi-Fi consumers. Thus, the ideal moment to put sharing criteria in place for the 5.9 GHz band is now.

We therefore respectfully urge you to make the 5.9 GHz band a centerpiece of your Administration’s efforts to make new unlicensed frequencies available to advance consumer broadband across the nation. We are committed to implementing one of the promising coexistence options that would reconfigure the band to permit Wi-Fi to share the band safely with incumbents and with ITS crash-avoidance applications.

The FCC has initiated a proceeding to consider such sharing, and is on the cusp of testing potential sharing solutions, in consultation with the Department of Transportation. But we will not succeed unless we move rapidly during this Administration, and with both agencies committed to making band sharing a reality in a way that both enables ITS crash-avoidance operations and permits commercially feasible unlicensed Wi-Fi equipment for enhanced broadband connectivity for U.S. consumers. Your leadership put us on the path to 500 MHz of new spectrum for broadband use—and we need your leadership again to ensure that we do not lose this unique opportunity to help meet that goal during your Administration.

Sincerely,

American Library Association
Benton Foundation
Broadcom
Center for Rural Strategies
Common Cause
CoSN -- the Consortium for School Networking
Consumer Federation of America
Dell

¹ http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/rulemaking/pdf/V2V/V2V-ANPRM_081514.pdf

Devicescape
Engine
Federated Wireless
Free Press
Google
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Intel
Mimosa Networks
National Cable and Telecommunications Association (NCTA)
Next Century Cities
Qualcomm
Open Technology Institute at New America
Public Knowledge
Ruckus Wireless
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB)
Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (WISPA)

cc: Jeffrey Zients, Director, National Economic Council