

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 16, 2020

Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I am concerned that at a time when the burden on utilities and emergency responders should be reduced in order to devote greater resources to their coronavirus response, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is instead forcing them to allocate time and resources to a rulemaking on the 6 GHz spectrum. Unlike the national crisis we are currently facing, the proposed FCC rule is neither timely nor necessary.

Our water, electricity, and natural gas utilities cannot spare the resources to deal with a complex proposal from the FCC that could dramatically change the reliability of their essential communications during an emergency, nor can police and fire departments. In addition to contending with the coronavirus pandemic, our nation is entering peak extreme weather season where the electric sector must devote sufficient resources to mitigating the damages from natural hazards such as wildfires and hurricanes.

It took you seven months to reply to my June 14, 2019, letter on the importance of the 6 GHz spectrum to utilities and emergency responders. Regrettably, your response did not address my questions about how the FCC has been cooperating with regulators and experts in the energy industry to ensure that this FCC proposal will not impact essential communications. I can only assume that the lack of response is because the FCC has failed to adequately cooperate or consult with these entities.

For decades, the 6 GHz band has proven to be an essential and reliable means for utilities and emergency responders to provide high-speed communications. Allowing unlicensed devices to occupy the same band as mission-critical utility and emergency response communications could cause harmful interference that is detrimental to network reliability. Secure communication is a mission critical function for the energy industry and must be protected to ensure a reliable, resilient electric grid.

I request that the FCC delay further consideration of this rule until (1) our nation recovers from the current crisis we are facing, and (2) the FCC engages in a meaningful way with the Department of Energy, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Electric Power Research Institute, and other experts in essential communications within the energy industry.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "M".

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

cc: Honorable Michael O'Rielly
Honorable Brendan Carr
Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Honorable Geoffrey Starks