



NEWS

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PRESS STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL CONCERNING 800 MHz ITEM AT JULY 8, 2004, AGENDA MEETING

“IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS IN THE 800 MHz BAND”

I believe that this is the most difficult, complex, and challenging issue I have ever worked on in seven years at the Commission. But what continues to emanate from this proceeding is that the cause is just. We have worked extremely hard, and today we take a bold action because our police and firefighters, who protect our local communities, deserve nothing less, particularly in these new and dangerous times.

We have worked diligently to provide the relief public safety so desperately needs. This Order provides for “Enhanced Best Practices” to mitigate interference; it puts in place a plan to reband the spectrum as a long-term solution; and it provides more spectrum for public safety operations.

In this debate, much has been made of the legal risks of this solution. The proceeding has seen some of the most ruthless lobbying I have ever encountered. We recognize the risks, however, and accept the challenge. We have taken prudent steps to try to protect the plan, always cognizant of the fact not to give away some of the most valuable spectrum we have for a song.

Yes, we admit, there are risks in the action we take today. But they seem to me to pale in comparison to the risks that our first responders face each and every day. This crystal clear fact demands that the government rise above the normal battles of commercial self-interests and simply find a solution. An enormous amount of time and commitment has been spent on valuations; the nickel and diming of what things are worth. But you cannot put a dollar value on the life of the men and women who wear the shield.

So here we are. We finally have completed two and half years of work. The question now shifts to Nextel. It has been a good partner and worked cooperatively with the Commission and public safety to bring a workable plan together. In many ways, we have adopted a plan along the lines that Nextel has urged. We have not, however, approved its plan outright because we always remain cognizant that our allegiance is only to the public good, not the private good. But it is a fair balance of the issues and it is the best solution this Commission can find. I am confident Nextel will make the best choice for its shareholders as it must, but we urge them to make the best choice for the good of the American people, as it should.

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In conclusion, I want to thank the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau staff who has worked exhaustingly. I also want to issue a special thanks to the wireless advisors of each the Commissioners. Not only did they have the majority of the items today, they had to work cooperatively and diligently on this effort and they are to be commended as well.

And finally, I thank my colleagues, who recognize the importance of speaking with one voice as a strong and unanimous Commission committed to the public good. They stayed late and worked hard to ensure that success. So, we thank them as well.

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