

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

AND

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL RONALD M. POLANT

ON H.R. 531, THE EMERGING TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
TECHNOLOGIES ACT OF 1991

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND FINANCE  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

12 MARCH 1991

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THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN, DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.  
I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU AND RESPOND TO  
QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE IMPACT OF THE EMERGING  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES ACT ON THE DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION, INCLUDING THE COAST GUARD AND FEDERAL AVIATION  
ADMINISTRATION.

AS CHIEF OF THE COAST GUARD'S OFFICE OF COMMAND, CONTROL AND  
COMMUNICATIONS, I MANAGE THE USE OF THE RADIO SPECTRUM BY THE  
COAST GUARD AND THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S OTHER SURFACE-  
MODE AGENCIES. THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR ABOUT 50,000 RADIO FREQUENCY ASSIGNMENTS. MANY OF THESE  
ASSIGNMENTS ARE FOR MOBILE UNITS COVERING LARGE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS;  
ONE ASSIGNMENT MAY INCLUDE AS MANY AS SEVERAL HUNDRED INDIVIDUAL  
RADIO UNITS ON SHIPS, AIRCRAFT, OR LAND VEHICLES.

ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW WE COULD BE AFFECTED BY THIS ACT IS THE  
MICROWAVE SPECTRUM IN THE 1710-1850 MHZ BAND, WHICH I UNDERSTAND  
IS WITHIN THE 13 PERCENT OF THE EXCLUSIVE FEDERAL SPECTRUM BEING

CONSIDERED FOR AT LEAST PARTIAL RE-ALLOCATION TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR. WE ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT UPON THIS BAND FOR OPERATION OF OUR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES, SEARCH AND RESCUE CONTROL COMMUNICATIONS, AND REMOTE OPERATION OF OUR RECEIVERS WHICH GUARD MARITIME DISTRESS CHANNELS. THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION IS EVEN MORE DEPENDENT UPON THAT BAND FOR OPERATION OF THEIR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEMS. BEFORE COMING HERE THIS MORNING, I CHECKED SPECTRUM AVAILABILITY IN THIS BAND FOR THREE CITIES WHERE WE OPERATE VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES: NEW YORK CITY, PUGET SOUND AND SAN FRANCISCO. WE FOUND NO UNUSED, AVAILABLE SPECTRUM IN THESE CITIES. SOME OTHER MICROWAVE SPECTRUM WHICH COULD BE AVAILABLE, SUCH AS THE 8 GHZ BAND, IS SIMILARLY CONGESTED. I WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO RE-ACCOMMODATE OUR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES AND OTHER SAFETY SERVICES IF WE WERE FORCED TO MOVE FROM THIS 1710-1850 MHZ BAND.

WITH THAT SAID, THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION UNDERSTANDS THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE COMPETITIVE POSITION OF OUR TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY AND THE DESIRE FOR THE PASSAGE OF THIS BILL BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR. WE SUPPORT GREATER OPENNESS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT PROCESS AND ENHANCED COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, AND HAVE PROPOSED SEVERAL SPECIFIC MEANS OF DOING SO TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE. WE ALSO SUPPORT

THE EFFORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND OTHERS TO ATTEMPT TO BALANCE THE NEEDS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. FOR THAT REASON, THE COAST GUARD AND THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PREFER THE ADMINISTRATION'S LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL. WE BELIEVE THE ADMINISTRATION'S VERSION WOULD PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN RELEASING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPECTRUM, WHILE MINIMIZING RISK TO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SERVICES SUCH AS VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL. AND, WE BELIEVE THIS VERSION BETTER ADDRESSES REIMBURSEMENT TO THOSE AGENCIES FORCED TO RE-ACCOMMODATE THEIR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU OR THE OTHER MEMBERS MIGHT HAVE.