

FCC Chairman Powell Sets Forth Policy Vision On Key Telecom Issues

Washington, D.C., April 22, 2002. In recent testimony before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary of the House Committee on Appropriations, FCC Chairman Michael K. Powell identified three areas of policy-making emphasis in the telecommunications arena for the upcoming year: broadband deployment, competition policy, and spectrum policy. The Chairman's comments with respect to each of these areas are summarized briefly below.

Broadband. Noting that one of the FCC's "central policymaking objectives is, and should be, the promotion of efficient, widespread deployment of broadband infrastructure," the Chairman told the Committee that, through a number of rulemaking proceedings, the Commission will attempt to bring "regulatory clarity to what is, at best, a murky and confusing policy area. In developing the FCC's broadband policies, the Chairman emphasized that the FCC will focus its efforts on "the statutory objectives of competition, universal service, and consumer protection."

Competition Policy. The Chairman maintained his steadfast support for competition in all parts of the telecommunications marketplace, telling the Committee that "competition is a fundamental and guiding statutory principle under the Telecommunications Act of 1996. It is the root from which most of our policy grows." More specifically, the Chairman stated that "ensuring that competitors have access to those network elements that are necessary to provide competing telecommunications services is only half the battle. . .to be useful, network elements must be provisioned in a timely manner." The Chairman also emphasized the importance of enforcement, referring to it "a cornerstone of our competition policy."

Spectrum Policy. The Chairman referred to spectrum as "an important and precious resource," and emphasized the importance of ensuring that it is used "wisely, and in a manner that creates the broadest public benefit." In this regard, the Chairman pointed to the Commission's recent reallocation of spectrum used for Channels 52-59, its designation of the 4.9 GHz band for public safety purposes, and its authorization of the use of spectrum for Ultra-Wideband technology. In what he referred to as "a major rulemaking" he also advised the Committee that the Commission had reallocated 27 MHz of spectrum previously allocated to the Federal Government, to permit the initiation of new and flexible services including fixed mobile service, telemetry, and low power radio.

The Chairman's comments were made during his testimony of the FCC's Fiscal Year 2003 budget estimates.