

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 22, 2013

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, South West
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

I oppose the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) proposal to allow the use of cellular telephones to make phone calls on airplanes. While the thought of listening to the constant babble of phone conversations during commercial flights already makes my head hurt, I am writing not about the annoyance such calls would bring, but rather about the more serious topic of in-flight safety.

I am concerned that allowing cellular phone calls during flights would mean that an already-distracted flying public would pay even less attention to safety-related announcements. They could miss announcements related to pending turbulence, preparations for landing, or even more serious in-flight emergencies.

An increasingly disgruntled traveling public would also be put on edge by being subjected to annoying chatter. Incidents of 'air rage' have been growing in recent years and present a serious threat to airline cabin safety. Adding an additional nuisance would certainly have the potential to make this problem worse.

But don't just take my word for it. The Association of Flight Attendants, a group of professionals with the most experience in managing airline cabin safety, are strongly opposed to this change, on the grounds that in-flight phone calls will be disruptive and distracting. Many polls indicate that most of the travelling public also opposes allowing in-flight cell phone calls.

I hope you will reconsider this ill-advised proposal and withdraw it from consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Begich
United States Senator