



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Bennie Thompson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2466 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Thompson:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

The FCC approved a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)* on December 12, 2013, to consider whether advances in technology no longer warrant – on a technological basis – the prohibition of in-flight mobile wireless services due to concerns about potential interference with terrestrial networks. The *NPRM* represents only the beginning of a process to consider carefully whether and how we should revise our rules to give airlines the ability to allow passengers to use mobile wireless services while flying above 10,000 feet.

Under the proposed rules, there would be several steps required before mobile wireless services could be used aloft: (1) the aircraft would need to seek FCC authorization to utilize the technology that captures a signal and keeps it on the plane so that it does not interfere with terrestrial networks (it is this interference that is the basis of the current prohibition – and if such interference can be eliminated by new onboard technology, the basis for the existing rule is removed); (2) the airline would have to take affirmative steps, beyond the FCC rules, to comply with the requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT), and any other federal agency asserting jurisdiction; and (3) the airline's own policies would have to be followed.

The *NPRM* makes clear that nothing in the proposal would limit the ability of airlines to ban wireless voice conversations in-flight. For example, an airline could choose not to offer voice service at all but provide only data communications so that passengers could engage in data-focused activities, such as accessing websites, sending and receiving text messages and e-mail, or utilizing social media to stay connected to friends and family. As you know, many airlines offer similar services using Wi-Fi today.

We are in complete agreement on the importance of safety and security aloft, and issued the *NPRM* only after consulting with the relevant federal safety, security and regulatory agencies. In addition, since the purpose of an *NPRM* is to gather facts, we have created a formal input process to examine safety and security matters. This includes a federal multi-stakeholder working group that FCC staff convened to consider national security and safety-related matters related to in-flight wireless services. The working group includes subject matter experts from the DOT, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DOJ), and other relevant federal agencies. We will continue to coordinate, solicit input, and seek guidance from our federal counterparts on this working group.

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As the Commission moves forward with our rulemaking proceeding, we will continue to work collaboratively with the federal agencies with appropriate jurisdiction and expertise to help shape policies and rules that best serve the public interest. As I stated previously, the *NPRM* is the beginning of a fact-gathering process, and the views you have shared will be included as part of that process.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Dina Titus  
U.S. House of Representatives  
401 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Titus:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

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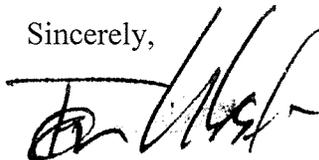
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Paul Tonko  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2463 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Tonko:

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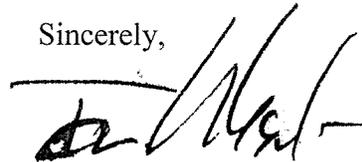
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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Peter Visclosky  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2256 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Visclosky:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

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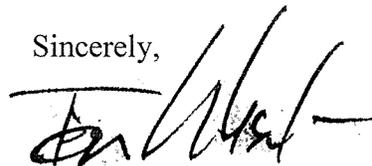
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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
U.S. House of Representatives  
118 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Wasserman Schultz:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the safety, security, and comfort implications of the potential for passengers to use mobile voice and wireless communications technology on commercial aircraft. I share your concerns and will not present a final recommendation regarding this issue to my fellow Commissioners until these issues are fully addressed in a collaborative fashion with other appropriate federal agencies. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of that proceeding and considered as part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) review.

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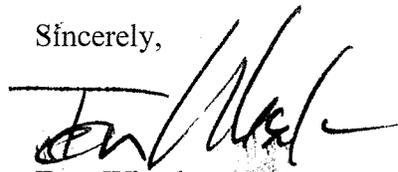
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Tom Wheeler



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Maxine Waters  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2221 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Waters:

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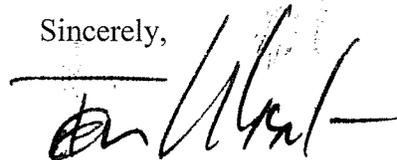
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Tom Wheeler



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Don Young  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Young:

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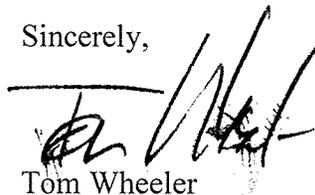
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Tom Wheeler