

How to Comment

Gathering and analyzing comments from the public is an important part of the Federal Communications Commission's rulemaking process. The FCC considers the public's input when developing rules and policies. By submitting comments, the public can take part in developing policies that affect telecommunications and broadcast issues. The following are some FCC-related terms and acronyms and some instructions that will help you in filing comments and understanding the FCC's decision-making processes.

Acronyms and Terms

Public Notice (PN): The FCC issues a PN to inform the public about an action or event. Sometimes a PN invites public comment. When a PN seeks public comment, it generally includes filing deadlines and information on how to file comments.

Petition for Rulemaking (Petition): A person outside of the FCC files a Petition to suggest new rules or changes to existing rules. Unless directed otherwise in the FCC's Public Notice seeking comment on the petition, the public has 30 days from the date of the Public Notice to submit comments on whether the FCC should grant or deny the petition. After reviewing the comments received in response to the petition, the FCC issues a Report and Order (R&O) disposing of the petition, a Notice of Inquiry (NOI), or a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). Copies of Petitions for Rulemaking are available for viewing on the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS), and for inspection in the FCC's Reference Information Center, 445 12th Street, SW, Room CY-A257, Washington, DC 20554.

Notice of Inquiry (NOI): The FCC issues a NOI to gather facts and information on a particular subject or issue to determine if further action by the FCC is warranted. Typically, an NOI asks questions about a given topic and seeks comments from the public on that topic.

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM): The FCC issues a NPRM to propose new rules or changes to existing rules and seek comments on the proposals. A summary of the NPRM is published in the *Federal Register* and announces the deadlines for filing comments and reply comments.

Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM): After reviewing the comments received in response to an NPRM, the FCC issues either a FNPRM seeking additional public comment on certain issues in the proceeding, or a Report and Order (R&O).

Report and Order (R&O): An R&O adopts new rules, amends existing rules or states that there will be no changes. Sometimes the FCC issues a combined R&O and FNPRM. The FCC publishes summaries of FNPRMs and R&Os in the *Federal Register*, and also states when a rule change will become effective.

Petition for Reconsideration: A party can file a Petition for Reconsideration within 30 days of the date the summary of a R&O appears in the *Federal Register*. A Petition for Reconsideration formally requests the FCC to modify its ruling.

Order on Reconsideration: The FCC adopts an Order on Reconsideration in response to a Petition for Reconsideration. It modifies a previous FCC action or states why the action will not be changed.

Memorandum Opinion and Order (MO&O): The FCC may adopt a MO&O in response to other requests from outside entities, such as petitions for waiver or petitions for forbearance, or when it takes other actions in a proceeding.

En banc: An en banc hearing is a presentation to the full Commission on specific topics, usually by representatives of interested outside groups. Topics for en banc hearings have included Children's Television, Digital Television and Broadcast Ownership.

Ex parte: The FCC's ex parte rules ensure that all participants in an FCC proceeding have a fair opportunity to learn of the views presented by others in the proceeding. An ex parte presentation is any written or oral communication by an outside party to the Commission, or any Commission staff involved in decision making, directed to the merits or outcome of a proceeding and not served on (mailed or delivered to) all the parties to the proceeding (if written) or of which all the parties have not been given advance notice (if oral). The ex parte rules establish whether, and under what circumstances, ex parte presentations may be made to the FCC. Most rulemaking proceedings are "permit but disclose," meaning that ex parte presentations are allowed as long as copies (or in the case of oral presentations, written summaries) are filed in the record of the proceeding. Certain other proceedings, such as those designated for hearings and licensing proceedings, are "restricted," meaning that ex parte communications are prohibited unless specifically exempted. You can obtain a copy of the FCC's ex parte rules online at: www.fcc.gov/exparte, or by calling the FCC's Office of the Secretary at (202) 418-0300, or (202) 418-2960 (TTY).

Filing Comments

The FCC does not specify a particular format for comments, but it is important to include the docket number or rulemaking number of the proceeding to which the comments relate. You can find this number on the first page of the FCC document or Public Notice opening the proceeding. Your comments should include your name and your views on the subject. Comments may be any length. If comments are more than 10 pages long, you should include a short summary.

Filing Electronically

The FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) allows you to submit comments electronically (via the Internet) for docketed or rulemaking proceedings. Electronic comments must be filed by midnight Eastern Time (ET) on the date of the deadline. Generally, you will file only one copy of an electronic comment, but if you are filing comments in a proceeding that lists multiple docket or rulemaking numbers on its front page, you must use the standard upload form and not ECFS Express. Procedures for submitting your comments using ECFS are outlined at fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs2/userManual/ecfsmanual.jsp. ECFS also allows you to view other comments that have been filed. For assistance using ECFS, send an email to ecfshelp@fcc.gov, or call the ECFS Help Desk at (202) 418-0193, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

Additionally, the FCC has created ECFS Express, a simplified comment filing process for consumers that is based on topics, rather than a docket or rulemaking number. ECFS Express lists the topics considered to be of most interest to consumers at fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs2/hotdocket/list. By clicking on a topic, an individual can fill in personal information, write their comments and press send to file the comments.



Filing in Paper Format

You may file print copies of written comments until 7 p.m. ET on the deadline date. Type comments in 12 point or larger font, or write legibly. Include a contact name, address and phone number in your comments. Cover letters are not necessary. If your comments are confidential, label **each** page “Not for Public Inspection” or “Confidential” in the upper right-hand corner. You must also explain why you believe the filing is entitled to confidentiality. When filing print copies of written comments, the FCC requires an original (with an original signature) and four copies. If you want your comments to be distributed to the Commissioners, the FCC requires an original and nine copies. If you are filing comments in a proceeding that lists multiple docket or rulemaking numbers on its front page, you must submit two additional copies for each referenced docket or rulemaking number. Each copy must be individually stapled. Use a rubber band, binder clip or paperclip to hold the whole package together.

You may either mail or hand-deliver print copies of written comments. Hand delivered filings for the Commission’s Secretary are accepted **only** at the following location: 236 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 110, Washington, DC 20002.

The hours of operation are from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. Commercial overnight mail, other than U.S. Postal Service Express mail and Priority mail, must be addressed to: 9300 East Hampton Drive, Capitol Heights, MD 20743.

Comments sent through the U.S. Postal Service should be addressed to:

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Room TW-B204
Washington, DC 20554

Filing for People With Disabilities

People with disabilities filing comments in non-print formats (i.e. Braille, audio or sign language video) should include a contact name, address and phone number. Always reference the docket or rulemaking number when filing in Commission proceedings. Providing a print copy will expedite processing. If you have questions about access for people with disabilities, send an email to FCC504@fcc.gov or call 1-888-CALL-FCC (voice), or 1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY).

Privacy and Online Information

If you voluntarily provide the FCC with personal information, by sending an e-mail or by filling out a form and submitting it through our Website, you are indicating voluntary consent for the FCC to use the information you are submitting to respond to your message and to help us provide you with the information and services that you have requested.

Your submission, including personal information, may be shared within the FCC as well as with other Federal or State agencies, or others if necessary to address matters raised in your submission as allowed by the Commission's systems of records or as otherwise required or authorized by statute, including requests from Congress, Freedom of Information Act requests from private individuals or companies, for law enforcement purposes, for routine agency uses subject to the Privacy Act, or under our access and public record rules.



The Commission works continuously to set out and implement procedures to regulate the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of Privacy Act-protected information. Visit our Privacy Act Web Page at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/privacy-act-information for complete information about our compliance with the Privacy Act of 1974, and information on how to file a Privacy Act request.

Any comments that you submit to the FCC on a proposed rulemaking, petition, or other document for which public comment is requested will be made public, including any personally identifiable information you include in your submission. We may share non-personally identifiable information with others, including the public, in aggregated form, in partial or edited form, or verbatim.

For more information about FCC privacy issues, go to: www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/privacy-policy.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at www.fcc.gov/consumers.

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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