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House and Senate Reach Agreement on Spectrum Reform Measure

February 16, 2012

This afternoon, House and Senate Conferees agreed to a Conference Report that extends the payroll tax cut, unemployment benefits and other related provisions. That measure also includes a final compromise between the House and Senate Commerce Committees on spectrum reform. The Conference Report will be delivered to the House and Senate later today. Both Chambers must pass the measure, but it will not be subject to amendment. We expect both bodies to vote on the compromise sometime on Friday or Saturday, and provided it passes, the President to sign the measure next week.

The final compromise addresses numerous spectrum reform issues. It reallocates the D Block to public safety. The D Block and the public safety broadband spectrum will be licensed to a new government authority inside the National Telecommunications and Information Association (NTIA), which bears the responsibility for securing deployment of a nationwide interoperable public safety mobile broadband network. To help pay for that effort, and pay for some of the costs of the bill, the measure grants the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the authority to conduct voluntary incentive auctions of commercial spectrum bands (including broadcast television). It also sets time frames for the auction of specific bands and identifies several Federal spectrum bands for reallocation to commercial use. In addition, the language addresses a number of other issues, including spectrum auction eligibility, Next Generation 911 services, the Telecommunications Development Fund, Federal spectrum relocation, and wireless facilities deployment.

Attached are two documents that explore this legislation in greater detail. One provides an in-depth summary of the spectrum provisions in the Conference Report. The other contains a side-by-side

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comparison of the final agreement to the key spectrum bills in the House and Senate. We will be happy to discuss any questions you might have about the bill and its upcoming implementation.