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Senators To FCC: GPS Must Be Protected

May 23, 2011

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Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) sent a letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski, asking him to take all necessary steps to protect the Global Positioning System (GPS) from interference that could cause interruptions.

"Millions of Americans rely on GPS to get around safely every day. It is also critically important to aviation safety, first responders, civil engineers who monitor dams and bridges, and it is central to our national defense capabilities," said Roberts, Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. "GPS is an integral part of our national economy. Farmers rely on GPS for greater efficiency and environmental protection, and just about every industry from manufacturing to distribution has come to rely on this valuable national utility. Reliable GPS affects virtually every American. GPS is far too important to have anything interfere with it."

"Many Nebraskans rely on GPS daily. From boosting crop yields to helping aircraft land safely, from improving rail safety to guiding drivers to their destinations, GPS is a vital tool for our economy, agricultural producers, national defenses, emergency responders and transportation networks," said Sen. Nelson, a member of both the Senate Armed Services and Agriculture committees. "Any interference could have a far-reaching and detrimental impact across our state and nation. As high-powered communication networks continue expanding, the government must make sure GPS isn't disrupted or degraded because it's an essential utility to millions of Americans."

The letter comes after the International Bureau, a sub-organization within the FCC, granted a conditional waiver earlier this year to allow a company, LightSquared, to build 40,000 ground stations throughout the United States to enhance its satellite network. Those stations could cause widespread interference to nearby GPS receivers, because the spectrum used by LightSquared is adjacent to the spectrum used by GPS.

Sen. Roberts and Sen. Nelson led the bipartisan letter, co-signed by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), Sen. Tim Johnson (D-S.D.), Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.), Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.), Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.), Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Sen. Jim Risch (R-Idaho), Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), and Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.).

The letter asks that the full Commission be involved in the process of making sure GPS is not compromised in any way, that the FCC require an objective demonstration of non-interference with GPS, and that the waiver for LightSquared be withdrawn until this demonstration is met.

(Source: Kansas Ag Connection)

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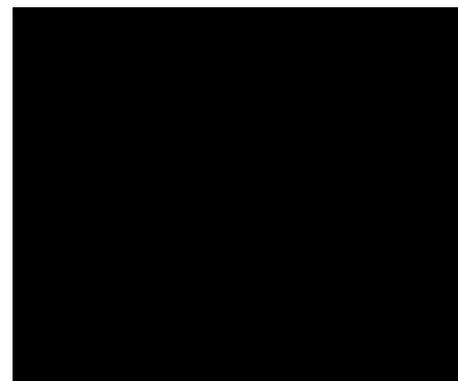
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