

CCA: FCC Wireless Chief Sees Need for Compromise on Auction Geography

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SAN ANTONIO – Roger Sherman didn't even bring a prepared speech to CCA.

Speaking at the CCA Global Expo Wednesday, the FCC's acting wireless bureau chief instead focused on directly addressing key issues and questions from CCA CEO Steven K. Berry.

Right off the bat, the conversation turned toward spectrum auctions, specifically the question of what geographic sizes should be used in licensing for the upcoming AWS and 600 MHz auctions.

Berry brought up CCA's suggested Partial Economic Areas, a middle ground between larger Economic Areas (EA) and Consumer Market Areas (CMA).

"You really can't have lots of different sizes and run the auction in a smooth manner," Sherman said, praising the efficiency and fair-play aspects of PEAs.

On that issue and other NPRM issues regarding the upcoming auctions, Sherman promised the FCC would soon begin sharing details about its plans for the incentive auction.

Following the quick Q&A, Berry opened up the conversation to audience questions. On the need for better access to devices for smaller carriers, Sherman said the FCC would be open to asking OEMs for more transparency around how certain devices are either included or excluded from some band compatibility. He added that phone unlocking is an important solution to that problem.

"Customers should be able to choose the carrier they want and not lose the phone they like," Sherman said, stressing the importance of fair phone unlocking policies.

During the quick round of questioning, Berry and Sherman also touched on the challenges the IP transition presents to smaller carriers still moving toward 4G and the bipartisanship that shaped current auction rules.

Sherman was at CCA filling in for FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, who was unable to attend because he was called before Congress.

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