Congressmen Urge FCC to Streamline Infrastructure Deployments

Andrew Berg

Congressmen Fred Upton (R-MI), and Greg Walden (R-OR) Thursday sent a letter FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler asking the commission to streamline the approval process for wireless infrastructure deployments.

The letter asks Wheeler for clarification of Section 6409(a) of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, which aims to speed the approval of eligible facilities requests.

Section 6409(a) states that “a State or local government may not deny, and shall approve, any eligible facilities request for a modification of an existing wireless tower or base station that does not substantially change the physical dimensions of such tower or base station.”

The letter asks for further clarification of when a modification "substatntially change[s] the physical dimensions" of a wireless facility.

The congressmen also asked for further clarification on the definitions of certain wording in the section, including items such as "wireless tower" and "base station."

PCIA President and CEO Jonathan Adelstein praised the letter in a statement, saying he was grateful that the House leadership recognizes the urgency of streamlining infrastructure deployments.

“Removing red tape and clarifying the rules of the road are crucial for expanding wireless broadband – and to the many thousands of high-wage jobs such deployment spurs throughout the country," Adelstein said. "It will take a lot of infrastructure to address the wireless data crunch and meet the rising consumer demand for wireless data."

The letter, as well as comments from Adelstein, echoed comments from FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai during a speech last week [1]at the Infrastructure Association's annual conference.

“Regulations can make it tough to deploy infrastructure,” Pai said, lamenting the fact that state and local municipalities decisions are often governed by antiquated one-size-fits-all rules and laws.

Pai also said that existing historic preservation regulations don't account for DAS and small-cell technologies.

“These systems are barely visible, and they hardly impact the surrounding

environment," Pai said, and in keeping with his Dylan motif added that "neither DAS nor small cells belong on Maggie's Farm no more."

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