

July 31, 2007
For Immediate Release



FCC AUCTION: ONE STEP FORWARD; MUCH LEFT FOR THE FUTURE.

Media Access Project (MAP) Senior Vice President Harold Feld issued the following statement in response to today's FCC decision on the upcoming spectrum auction:

"The modest actions the FCC ordered today will not deflect increasing public pressure to 'free the iPhone' and to open wireless networks to innovation and free expression."

"Americans will no longer quietly allow giant corporations intent on restricting functionality on phones and other wireless devices, blocking access to innovative software, and otherwise degrading services customers have purchased, to have their way in the arena of public policy."

"Whatever else can be said about today's vote, Chairman Martin deserves credit for starting a national debate about the future of broadband and wireless services. Consumers also acknowledged the heroic efforts of Democratic Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein to obtain 'wholesale open access' in the face of vigorous opposition from some of the most powerful companies in the country."

"Regrettably, Chairman Martin chose to stop short of requiring 'wholesale open access.' MAP and the other members of the Public Interest Spectrum Coalition (PISC) had proposed that the FCC set aside half of the spectrum to be auctioned for that purpose. Absent that provision, it remains far from certain that the auction will produce an independent 'third pipe' broadband provider."

"One positive development was the adoption of 'anonymous bidding' rules, which will limit incumbents' ability to target and block new auction entrants. In last year's AWS auction, which did not have anonymous bidding, the major cable and wireless companies were able to drive off satellite TV providers and other new entrants. Anonymous bidding provides some hope for a new entrant despite the failure to adopt wholesale open access."

"Unfortunately, at the end of the day, today's action leaves too much of our broadband wireless future in doubt. We must still confront and solve the cable/phone company duopoly that threatens freedom of speech online as well as America's capacity to compete successfully in the information age."

30/30/30

Contact: Harold Feld
Senior Vice President
hfeld@mediaaccess.org
(202) 454 - 5684