

Sockets



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554
AUG 14 1997

96-18

Mr. Jerry T. Catt
4432 Danforth Road
Columbus, Ohio 43224

Dear Mr. Catt:

Thank you for your letter of April 3, 1997, which was forwarded to us from the office of Vice President Al Gore, regarding the Commission's policies with regard to licensing of 931 MHz paging systems. You express concern that your paging application will be dismissed and that paging frequencies will be awarded in a competitive bidding process.

The Commission is not retroactively dismissing pending applications. In fact, the Commission has taken several steps to allow site-by-site licensing to continue during the rulemaking process. Initially, when the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was adopted on February 8, 1996, the Commission imposed a freeze on new applications for proposing geographic area licensing for exclusively licensed paging channels, including 931 MHz channels. The freeze was imposed for two reasons: (1) accepting new applications after releasing the Notice would impair the objectives of the proceeding, and (2) many speculation paging applications had been filed recently with the Commission, causing a substantial backlog of applications and delaying the processing of legitimate applications. All pending applications (*i.e.*, applications filed with the Commission by February 8, 1996) were processed under our then-existing rules. The Commission also sought comment from the public regarding appropriate interim licensing options during the rulemaking proceeding.

Based on the comments that were filed regarding interim licensing, the Commission subsequently partially lifted the freeze and allowed paging licensees to file for expansion sites within 40 miles of an operating site. Thus, site-by-site licensing continued for incumbent licensees seeking to expand their systems. A Public Notice was released advising that all such expansion applications filed on or before July 31, 1996 would be processed, and that applications filed after July 31, 1996 might not be processed.

On February 20, 1997, the Commission released a Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making that adopted rules governing geographic area licensing for paging licenses and established competitive bidding procedures for those systems. Specifically, the Commission determined that all mutually exclusive applications for non-nationwide common carrier paging licenses and exclusive non-nationwide private carrier paging channels would be subject to competitive bidding procedures. The Commission also decided to dismiss all applications filed after July 31, 1996 and all pending mutually exclusive applications which could not be resolved under our pre-existing rules.

The Commission has imposed similar freezes in a number of other proceedings to facilitate the transition to geographic licensing and auctions, including Multipoint Distribution Service, 800 and 900 MHz Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR) Service, Location and Monitoring Service, 220 MHz Service and 39 GHz Service. Our decision in these proceedings to suspend acceptance of applications while the related rulemaking was pending advances two critical goals -- preservation of our ability to assign licenses through auctions, and deterrence of license fraud and speculation. In particular, we are concerned that the potential benefits of geographic area licensing, with competitive bidding used to select from among competing applicants, would be undermined by continuing to invite site-specific applications for "free" spectrum on a first-come, first-served basis. Similarly, the Commission's decision to dismiss pending mutually exclusive applications and post-July 31, 1996 applications is well within its authority and does not constitute retroactive action.

Assigning frequencies by auction helps deter fraud and speculation and ensures that this valuable public resource is assigned rapidly and efficiently to the parties who value it the most, rather than given away to the first party who files its application with the Commission. The Commission has stated its belief in other contexts (such as SMR) that auctions will minimize administrative or judicial delays in licensing, particularly in comparison to other licensing methods such as comparative hearings, lotteries (which are specifically prohibited by the statute if the service is auctionable), or "first-come, first-served" procedures.

The Commission's newly adopted rules to auction paging frequencies is consistent with Section 309(j) of the Communications Act, which sets forth certain criteria for determining when auctions should be used to award spectrum licenses. Pursuant to these criteria, auctions are to be used to award mutually exclusive initial licenses or construction permits for services likely to involve the licensee receiving compensation from subscribers. The statute also requires that the Commission determine that auctioning the spectrum will further the public interest objectives of Section 309(j)(3) by promoting rapid development of service, fostering competition, recovering a portion of the value of the spectrum for the public, and encouraging efficient spectrum use.

Moreover, the Commission has taken a number of steps to ensure that paging providers that are small businesses are not adversely affected by the transition to geographic area licensing and the use of competitive bidding procedures to award paging licenses. We are establishing licensing areas of a size that will provide realistic bidding opportunities for small and medium-sized operators. We have also adopted special provisions in our competitive bidding rules for small businesses to facilitate their participation in the auction process. In the Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making, we have proposed to allow paging licensees to partition their licensing areas in order to promote quicker build-out of small markets and rural areas.

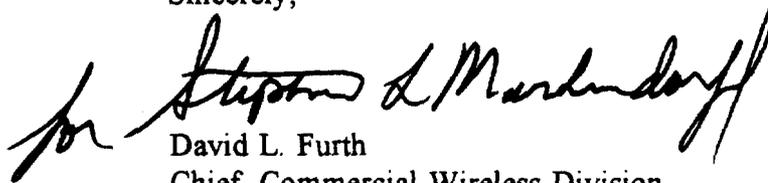
Mr. Jerry T. Catt

3.

These facts regarding the rulemaking proceeding and interim licensing are a matter of public record in the Commission's rules, orders, and public notices. If you used an application preparation service and were not advised of these facts, you could be a victim of a fraudulent application investment scheme. The Commission, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Trade Commission are investigating fraudulent investment schemes involving paging and other wireless services. Generally, the perpetrators target unsophisticated investors and represent that paging licenses have a great value that can be recouped through subsequent sale. Investors also may be deceived or unaware of the obligations with which licensees must comply. Unfortunately, investors who are induced to file applications are often targeted a second time by different fraud perpetrators offering to construct the paging system. The FCC Call Center, 1-888-CALL-FCC (225-5322), will forward data from telemarketing fraud victims to the National Fraud Information Center where it is made available to law enforcement personnel on a nationwide basis. We strongly recommend that you call the FCC Call Center and provide the Call Center representative with information pertaining to the paging application investment. Additionally, you may also wish to promptly contact your State Commission, State Attorney General or the National Fraud center directly at 1-800-876-7060.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "for Stephen L. Mardendoff". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

David L. Furth
Chief, Commercial Wireless Division
Wireless Telecommunications Bureau



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

*PLB
preparing*

3909

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: June 3, 1997
TO: Managing Director
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Enclosed are letters from constituents concerning matters related to the Federal Communications Commission. This information was sent to the office of Vice President Gore.

On behalf of the Vice President, I am forwarding this material with the request that the issues be addressed in an appropriate and expeditious manner. An acknowledgement of receipt and a notification of this referral has been sent to each of the constituents.

This office takes no position on the merits of the requests, nor do we make any particular recommendation other than asking for a timely and substantive reply to the writers. Please answer the correspondents directly. No reply to this office is necessary.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

Bill Mason
Director of Correspondence
for the Vice President

BM/wem
Enclosures

FCC

April 3, 1997

Vice President of the United States
Al Gore
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington D. C. 20500

Dear Vice President Gore:

I am an applicant for a 931 MHz paging license in the Tacoma, Wash. Market, which application is currently pending before the Federal Communications Commission. I am writing to urge you to insist that the Federal Communications Commission reverse its February 24, 1997, decision in WT Docket No. 96-18 looking to dismiss my pending application and issue 931 Mhz paging licenses in my market solely by auctions in the future.

I paid thousands of dollars for application preparation and filing services and properly filed my application in accordance with the FCC Rules and policies then in effect at the time of filing. The fact that the FCC now wants to change its rules, for the second time, dismiss my application and hold an auction, means that the substantial amount of money I have invested in this project will be lost. Neither I nor many other similarly situation applicants who properly filed in good faith have the resources to bid hundreds of thousands of dollars to win an auction license for an entire, big as a state-sized MTA geographic area, as proposed by the Commission.

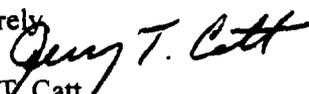
I will have no opportunity to obtain an FCC license, build a paging station and participate in the communications industry as I had hoped to do, and which Congress has committed to seeing happen. I will lose all of my substantial investment to date because the FCC wants to arbitrarily change its Rules after applications were filed. This retroactive action by a Federal agency is not fair, and should not be condoned by Congress, also as stated above, this is the second time that they have attempted to change rules, just a year ago in 1996 we went through the same thing, and the FCC backed off.. Congress has oversight of this Federal agency and the FCC should be held accountable for its actions.

I strongly believe that this type of conduct on the part of the FCC is both morally and ethically wrong, to accept applications and money for the filing of licenses, and then to decide to change the rules in midstream so to speak, so they can realize a bigger return by using the auctions, and to have no regard for the applicants who did things right and now stand to lose all the way round, both from the substantial amount of money involved, but the time also involved, this process has been dragging on now for more than a year.

I urge you to conduct an inquiry and take appropriate action on behalf of your constituents and have the FCC correct its action before it is too late. All I am asking is equitable treatment, which in this case could include "grandfathering" of mine and similar applications by the Commission, and appropriate processing and granting of these applications. Such action would not interfere with future auctions, as planned by the FCC.

Thank you for your PROMPT evaluation and intervention on mine and others behalf.

Sincerely,


Jerry T. Catt