

DOCKET ET 04-37

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.

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BPL

June 14, 2004

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Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

Sir/Madam:

The attached communication is sent for your consideration. Please investigate the statements contained therein and forward me the necessary information for reply, returning the enclosed correspondence with your answer.

Yours truly,

James L. Oberstar  
Member of Congress  
2365 Rayburn H.O.B  
Washington, DC 20515

M.C.

Att'n: Melody Hamoud

21 JUN 2004 RCUD

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Capitol Correspond  
Incoming Email Message

Constituent ID: 273972

Dr. Richard Borken  
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Activity Created: 4/29/2004  
Activity ID: 386418  
Interest Code(s):

Incoming Message:

Subject Desc: Communications

Date Received: 4/29/2004 9:48:38 AM

I am writing to urge you to oppose the current effort by President Bush's Administration and the FCC to allow the use of Broadband over Power Lines, called BPL, as a new means for high-speed internet access. I am one of 680,000 federally-licensed Amateur Radio Operators ("Ham radio" operators) in the country, and this technology will cause significant interference to communications on the short-wave radio bands for us and for international broadcasting, aeronautical, maritime, and military services. Depending on how BPL is implemented, it may also cause interference to low-band VHF communications used by police, fire and emergency personnel. There are other more appropriate technologies available on which the Administration and the FCC should focus.

BPL uses power lines to transmit internet signals using radio frequencies (RF) as a carrier. But power lines are not shielded and were not designed for this use. The RF signals radiate from the power lines and cause significant interference to nearby radio receivers. This effect has been documented at various sites in the US and other countries where BPL is in use.

I am sure you know that amateur radio operators world-wide are always the first people to provide communications at disaster scenes and at other times when normal communications are disrupted. This is because we own and maintain our own radio equipment, we use it all the time, and we are ready and willing to jump in immediately to help. BPL will provide a level of interference which will cover up the weak radio signals we are trying to hear. It will be a disaster to our ability to provide needed communications. Yes, the power lines are probably dead during a disaster, but the point is we are available for a disaster because we use our equipment all the time. BPL will severely disrupt this.

The FCC recognizes the interference potential of BPL and is currently in a rulemaking proceeding, ET Docket No. 04-37, that proposes new requirements and measurement guidelines for BPL systems. However, The FCC proposals are far short of what is needed to protect over-the-air communications services. Also, President Bush specifically supported BPL in his recent speech in Minneapolis. He's getting bad advice.

There are other ways to provide high-speed internet services to consumers that do not cause RF pollution as BPL does. These include fiber-to-the-home, cable, DSL and broadband wireless. BPL is thought of as a solution to high-speed internet for rural areas. However, a BPL signal only carries a few thousand feet down a power line and then must be amplified or repeated. This requires significant cost for additional hardware and thus is

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unlikely to be economically viable for rural areas.

In addition to holding an Extra Class Amateur Radio license, I also hold a Ph.D. in Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and I am a retired Vice President of a leading technology corporation. I can assure you this technology is fundamentally the wrong way to go.

Please let the Administration and the FCC know you oppose the current efforts to deploy BPL.

Thank you,

Dr. Richard J. Borken