

No more corporate protectionism!

Throughout the years, we have attempted to maintain competition in the telecommunications market, most markedly with the 1974 antitrust suit against Bell. Despite the limited success that ruling had in restarting competition at the local level, the major carriers have now re-established their dominance over both local and long distance, as well as Internet and media delivery services. This most recent attempt at grabbing the spectrum for themselves is nothing more than an attempt to limit their exposure to competition from smaller, more agile companies ready and willing to take advantage of the space.

The amount of innovation taking place by small businesses with respect to the spectrum up for auction is staggering. Granting the spectrum to a handful of corporations, who have never been trusted to act in the interests of their customers but only to their stockholders, would effectively put a stop to dozens of projects I would like to see come to fruition. It may seem attractive to provide the spectrum to companies that appear to have the bankroll to develop, but that theory falls flat when access is limited in such a drastic manner. Without active competition in the space, even from smaller companies, the space becomes stagnant and developments are slow. Large companies, with unrealistic expectations from shareholders, strive to maintain 10-15% growth year after year. With pressure like that, locking up this spectrum prevents them from having to develop it at a pace that it otherwise could be if left to the commons.

Even with the spectrum left open to competition, the major carriers have the option to enter. With this in mind, there is only one reason for their demand to control the spectrum. It makes good business sense to lock up the band and protect a potential revenue stream, especially when it allows the company to slow development of the space.

At the end of the day, the major carriers are the backbone of the Internet. At multiple points along the way, fees are paid to them to provide that access. Keeping this one space open to all does not in any way cut down on existing profit lines for the major carriers, it only forces them to do what any other company need do in the first place, compete for a new profit stream.

Do not allow the FCC to engage in corporate protectionism. We cannot and should not allow our vital infrastructure to be controlled by multi-national corporations with no loyalties to the nations in which they operate. Don't stifle competition, create it by leaving the space for all.