

Roberts Applauds Decision to Protect GPS

FCC decision important to public safety and many Kansas industries ranging from aviation to agriculture

Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) who has led the charge to protect public safety, aviation, military and precision agriculture uses of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) from potential harmful interference today hailed the decision by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to reject a plan to create a new wireless network because it would have interfered with the GPS signal.

“Any Kansan with a GPS in his or her car was going to be affected by the interference this conflicting network posed,” said Roberts. “This is a particularly big win for public safety as well as precision agriculture, aviation and other industries critical to the Kansas economy that rely on seamless GPS communication.

“I’m pleased the FCC has agreed with my concerns and taken measures to block LightSquared’s proposed network due to dangerous interference with GPS. While I remain committed to the continued expansion of broadband networks, there was simply too much at stake with this proposal that put our public and national security at risk. It would have been irresponsible to allow any network to interfere with a system so important to moving goods, defending our homeland and feeding the world.”

FCC’s decision late yesterday followed extensive testing by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and other agencies, which concluded deployment of the LightSquared network would have caused irreparable harm to GPS dependent industries, such as aviation, defense, personal location devices and agriculture, because the spectrum used by LightSquared is adjacent to the spectrum used by GPS.

Senator Roberts worked with many Kansas companies and associations in this effort including Garmin, John Deere & Company, Case New Holland, FedEx, UPS, National Business Aviation Association (NBAA), Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association, Caterpillar, Agricultural Retailers Association, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials among others.

In May 2011, Sen. Roberts and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) sent a letter to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, asking him to take all necessary steps to protect GPS.

In November of last year, Sen. Roberts introduced an amendment to prohibit the FCC from using any appropriated funds to allow LightSquared to build out a broadband network until the agency could prove the expansion will not interfere with GPS. Similar legislation, championed by Congressman Yoder, was signed into law as part of the consolidated Appropriations bill.