

# **Telecom Alert: March 26, 2018 - \$600 Million for Rural Broadband; Wireless Infrastructure Order; Hawaii False Missile Alert Hearing; Signal Booster Restrictions Lifted; 4.9 GHz Band**

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## **Federal Budget Allocates \$600 Million for Rural Broadband**

Congress passed a bipartisan [omnibus spending package](#) last week just in time to prevent another government shutdown. President Trump signed the bill into law on March 23, 2018. Funding for infrastructure was an important piece of the package, including \$600 million allocated to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for rural broadband grants and loans. The budget also included the RAY BAUMS Act and the MOBILE NOW Act.

## **FCC Adopts Wireless Infrastructure Streamlining Report and Order**

On March 22, 2018, the Commission adopted the Wireless Infrastructure Streamlining Report and Order at the FCC's March Open Meeting. The final text has not been released, but a draft circulated earlier in March exempted small cell deployments from NHPA and NEPA review, updated the tribal review process, and included an agency "shot clock" for processing Environmental Assessments. Simultaneously, both the House and Senate have introduced the [RAPID Act](#), which also aims to streamline the NHPA/NEPA process.

## **FCC Seeks to Increase Use of 4.9 GHz Band**

The FCC adopted a [Sixth Further NPRM](#) to address expansion and investment concerns for the 50 MHz of spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band allocated exclusively to public safety communications. Currently, 90,000 licenses are available in the 4.9 GHz band, but only 3.5% are being utilized by public safety entities. The Commission seeks comment on alternatives to encourage use and

investment in the band.

## Hawaii False Missile Alert Hearing

The Senate Commerce Committee has announced the date for a [field hearing in Hawaii](#). The hearing will be held April 5 and will address the Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts. It will focus specifically on the false missile alert that occurred in January.

## Personal Use Restrictions Lifted for Signal Boosters

The FCC adopted a [Second Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#), which eliminates personal use restrictions on consumer signal boosters for businesses, public safety entities, educational institutions, and other consumers who could benefit from amplifying wireless signals. The FNPRM proposes further actions to increase usefulness and effectiveness of signal boosters. This follows a 2013 FCC [ruling](#), which restricted boosters exclusively to personal use and specific spectrum bands. The changes are intended to improve wireless coverage in rural areas where cell signals are weak.

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