

New Coalition Pushes IP-Based Wireless Issues

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A new wireless coalition has been formed to press for changes and for what it considers "enhancements" in spectrum-management policies to help promote Internet Protocol-based technologies, services, applications and other advancements via RF use.

The Wireless Broadband Coalition (WBC) includes as its initial members Verizon Wireless; Qualcomm; EarthLink; Lucent Technologies; Nortel; Cingular Wireless (the joint venture of AT&T and BellSouth); and the CDMA Development Group, an international consortium of companies working on the evolution of third-generation (3G) CDMA wireless systems around the world. The new group says it will generally advocate policies that promote investment in the continued deployment and improvement of wireless networks "to meet consumer demand for next generation wireless broadband services."

The group, which is seeking additional members, is being run by Executive Director David Taylor, head of Capitol Solutions, a Washington, D.C.-based lobbying and public-affairs consultancy. "Ultimately, the industry's ability to deploy reliable, secure mobile services nationwide depends on spectrum, an asset that is controlled by the federal government," says Taylor, maintaining the WBC will press for "pro-consumer spectrum-management policies in Washington."

One of the WBC's primary missions is to work with the U.S. Congress, the Administration and other federal stakeholders to campaign for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rulings regarding an "exclusive-use, flexible-rights model" governing spectrum usage as well as the continued use of FCC auctions as a market-oriented way to allocate spectrum for commercial use.

Another WBC position is that wireless broadband and communications services; national security; and federal, state and local public-safety communications capabilities depend on spectrum that is free of interference from other sources; in particular, it claims to want measures that help protect public-safety personnel, critical government communications capabilities and wireless consumers from "intentional interference."

In a prepared statement, Dick Lynch, chief technology officer at Verizon Wireless, said the new WBC will advocate for the necessary "rules of the road to insure the reliability, quality, and security that customers deserve." Dr. Paul Jacobs, Qualcomm's CEO, said decisions made in Washington, D.C. "have a profound effect on the future of the wireless industry, particularly in the area of spectrum management and allocation," and that "wireless innovators need a voice on spectrum policy in the nation's capital." And Chris Putala, EarthLink's executive vice president of public policy, said the wireless Internet service provider and other WBC member companies "are convinced that both licensed and unlicensed spectrum-based technologies are essential."