

FCC's Martin Makes Spectrum Auction Top Priority

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Chairman Kevin Martin says his goals are to create a "level playing field" for frequency use and to make sure the industry isn't overregulated.

FCC Chairman Kevin Martin told attendees at the CTIA trade show here that his top priority as chairman is to see that the auction for spectrum space currently occupied by broadcasters goes off on time. Martin was the opening keynote speaker at the CTIA show that started March 27.

Martin said he has a Congressional mandate to hold the spectrum auction prior to Jan. 28, 2008. He said the frequencies being freed up are currently being used by television stations, and will be available as those stations convert to digital technology by February 2009.

"We need to allow competition, but make sure that the industry is not overregulated," Martin said.

He said part of freeing the industry from regulation is making sure that all data services, whether wired or wireless, are in the same regulatory category. To do that, he said, "We're making sure there's enough spectrum."

Martin said his plan is to make sure that the Federal Communications Commission considers the proposals for use of the spectrum in time for an auction by the end of 2007. "We want to create a level playing field," he said.

Martin said part of his plan for creating a level playing field is to make sure that there's enough competition for access to the Internet, including wired and wireless access of all types. "There's competition among platforms," he said, noting that the wireless industry has the strongest competition of all.

"We need to make sure we're not funding yesterday's technology," Martin said. He said funds for universal access used to go only to the traditional phone companies, but this is changing to make sure that all types of service are available. "Rural users need to be reached as well," he said.

When asked about his top three priorities for the year, Martin mentioned only one. "We need to complete that auction," he said.

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