

# US Congress approves wireless spectrum auction

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A bill passed by the House and the Senate extending [payroll tax](#) cuts and jobless benefits also calls for the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) to conduct auctions of [wireless spectrum](#) for commercial use.

Wireless carriers and technology companies have been demanding

access to more of the airwaves to allow them to keep pace with the explosive growth of Internet-connected smartphones and tablet computers.

"Congress has recognized the vital importance of freeing up more spectrum for [mobile broadband](#)," [FCC chairman](#) Julius Genachowski said in a statement.

"Nearly two years ago, the FCC's National Broadband Plan identified the spectrum crunch as a threat to America's mobile leadership, and proposed incentive auctions as a key strategy to help meet this challenge," he said.

The auction plan calls for the sale of some spectrum that is currently used by [television broadcasters](#). Some of the proceeds from the sale would be used to build a nationwide network for police, fire and other emergency services.

Steve Largent, chief executive of CTIA, which represents wireless carriers, said his group has been advocating for more spectrum "so America's wireless industry can remain the world's leader in the deployment of advanced wireless services."

The congressional vote "represents an important step toward meeting the industry's spectrum needs," Largent said.

"Making spectrum available will make it possible for America's wireless carriers to offer consumers better, faster, more ubiquitous wireless broadband service," he said.

"This will help ensure our wireless broadband products have more usable spectrum and thus will increase the likelihood that the US will remain the global leader of the Internet economy," said Gary Shapiro, chief

executive of the [Consumer Electronics Association](#) (CEA).

The Telecommunications Industry Association said "the impact of spectrum availability on the US economy will be enormous and cannot be underestimated."

The FCC has said the release of new spectrum will lead to a "host of new technologies" such as "super Wi-Fi," which would have longer range, faster speeds and more reliable connections.

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