

Commerce Department Asks Congress to Extend PSIC Grant Performance by Two Years

The Commerce Department has sent Congress draft legislation that would give public safety agencies up to 2 more years to complete their Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program projects. Responding to the short timeframes allowed to complete PSIC projects, Commerce General Counsel Cameron Kerry sent draft legislation to the Congressional leadership in late July asking for the PSIC extension from September 2010 to 2012.

The PSIC Grant Program directed the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to award PSIC grants totaling \$968 million by September 30, 2007. To meet this deadline, NTIA awarded grants before recipients had submitted their required Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and Investment Justifications. Because funds were not disbursed until these plans and justifications had been approved, the amount of time spent developing plans and waiting for approval delayed project initiation by up to 12 months, and PSIC recipients did not have the full 3-year award period to implement their programs.

To assure that the benefits of the PSIC Grant Program are achieved, the draft legislation would authorize NTIA to extend the period of performance for individual investments on a case-by-case basis for a period not to exceed 2 years.

The draft legislation also seeks to permanently extend the Federal Communications Commission (FCC's) auction authority, which expires in 2012; give the FCC the authority to impose spectrum fees on frequencies that were not auctioned; and clarify that the FCC has the authority to assign orbital locations and spectrum predominantly used for domestic satellite services via auctions.