

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW.
Washington DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

It has come to our attention that the Federal Communications Commission is considering a proposal that would close a significant number of its regional field offices. Under the proposal, the total number of field offices would be reduced from twenty four to eight with a similar reduction in field staff. As part of that plan, the Portland, Oregon field office now located in Vancouver, WA would be closed. The nearest FCC field office for Oregon would be located in San Francisco, CA.

We are very concerned about closing the FCC's Portland field office, as it would have significant negative consequences to the citizens of our state. Under the proposal, FCC inspectors and personnel would have to travel from San Francisco, CA to address any emergency communications situation. While we understand the FCC will keep a team at its Columbia, MD office to address emergencies, that office is simply too far away to meet immediate needs during emergencies in Oregon and lacks the local knowledge and contacts that would enable efficient resolution of interference problems.

Since its inception in 1934, the FCC's primary obligation has been to police the electromagnetic spectrum to prevent interference among various communications technologies. Broadcasting, wireless phone systems, public safety communications, radar, FAA communications systems and even shipping all depend on an interference-free environment to operate effectively. This is extremely important during natural disasters, where these systems are essential to protecting the lives of citizens in our districts and elsewhere. As we move forward towards an economy based largely on wireless communications sharing access to the airwaves, the FCC needs to increase its spectrum enforcement capabilities, not decrease them.

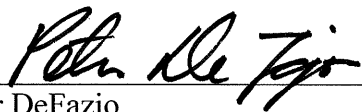
It is our understanding that the Portland field office has been at the front line of many technical situations in a timely and professional manner for many years. In instances when new aircraft antennas were interfering with NOAA satellites, the staff in Portland was there to solve the situation in a timely manner so that potentially life-saving signals were not blocked. The office has also been an integral partner with Oregon's Emergency Alert System (EAS) to ensure the prompt dissemination of alerts to the widest possible audience, or to specific areas, without obstruction. In another instance, we understand the field staff has alleviated interference with FBI repeaters, ensuring safety for all parties involved. Moreover, having a local link to the FCC

Enforcement Branch promotes a positive working relationship between Oregon's broadcasters and the FCC that cannot be replicated by distant agents in San Francisco or Maryland.

Because of the importance of this issue, we urge the FCC to commence an open, transparent proceeding that would solicit public comment prior to taking action to close any of its field offices. This will allow Congress to evaluate the potential impact of the closures, offer the public an opportunity to examine the data that underpins the proposal, and provide time to ensure that adequate alternative protocols are in place should the FCC proceed with the closure.

We understand the Commission's desire to reduce expenses. Nonetheless, such reductions should not come at the expense of allowing interference to increase, especially to vital public safety, wireless and broadcast communications services. We urge you to delay closing this office until you complete a full Notice and Comment proceeding on this issue. We look forward to hearing from you regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress