



Leading Telecommunications and Technology Groups Oppose Proposed Ban of Wireless Communications on U.S. Commercial Flights

EMBARGOED Until: May 6, 2009

Contacts: Carl Biersack (IPCC) (202) 725-8116

Meghan Henning (CEA) 703-907-7654

Amy Storey (CTIA) 202-736-3207

Marie-Pierre Bloch (SIA) (202) 349-3632

Charlie Greenwald (TA) 703- 967-3150

Mike Snyder (TIA) (703) 907-7723

Washington, DC—Today in a letter to Congress, The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), CTIA-The Wireless Association®, The Satellite Industry Association (SIA), TechAmerica, The Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) collectively voiced their opposition to a proposed ban on the usage of wireless telecommunications on U.S. commercial flights. The groups joined other leading passenger rights organizations and national business associations that recently expressed concerns about the rush to ban inflight communications and the fact that it has been proposed without any formal, public input from consumers, stakeholders or experts.

“Instead of eliminating the option to use wireless devices on airplanes, we believe a study is needed to determine whether there is a demand by consumers. Ultimately, we believe that customers should make the decision on whether they want to use their wireless device while traveling on airplanes,” said Jot Carpenter, Vice President, CTIA-The Wireless Association. “Many airplanes have been equipped with mobile phones for decades, and we believe the use of today’s more personal wireless technology should be thoroughly explored. We appreciate the concerns some might have, but those can be addressed through a careful and deliberate examination of in-flight demand and how such service might be offered.”

For 18 months now, 16 commercial carriers have offered inflight wireless communications services on 3 continents going to 36 nations in close to two hundred different city destinations on 10,000 flights. Users of inflight telecommunications services will be approaching half a million inflight users this year.

“Legislation prohibiting the use of technology is as problematic as legislation mandating the use of technology,” said Michael Petricone, Senior Vice President for Government Affairs of the Consumer Electronics Association. “An outright ban slipped into an authorization bill is not warranted for a technology that is as safe and widely accepted as voice communications.”

“An outright ban leaves too many benefits for society on the table without a serious weighing of the facts,” said TechAmerica Senior Vice President for Federal Government Affairs, Joshua Lamel. “From productivity gains in a down economy to simple human contact, inflight broadband and voice services will change the lives of the flying public for the better.”

There is no doubt that inflight communications is transforming the air traveling experience in the international routes. It has given passengers everything from the ability to make time critical business decisions to simply saying “good night” to a loved one. Connectivity is the essence of communications and passengers often find themselves in a stressful situation, and that is the kind of moment where inflight communications makes a positive difference. The technology is safe, it is rapidly growing in overseas markets and can be available for the domestic traveling public soon.

“These systems have been successfully launched in Europe, Asia, Australia and the Middle East. Real world experiences with these commercial deployments have demonstrated that there are no safety concerns whatsoever, and the social issues are being effectively managed and are not proving to be a problem,” added the industry leaders.

“We believe it is not appropriate for Congress to require the FAA to prohibit the use of voice communications from mobile phones on aircraft. This is not an issue of passenger safety, and the social concerns can and should be addressed by means other than legislation,” said the industry groups. “We respectfully request that Congress not impose a flat ban on voice over wireless technology on aircraft, but rather ask for a study to consider the social issues raised by this use.”

It is both fair and logical that Congress get the facts through a federally chartered study before it enacts a permanent broad-brushed federal ban on inflight communications. The standard for establishing any federal ban should be rooted in public health or safety risk and a study can be used to examine the empirical data and current real world experiences to see if that criterion has been met.

[For more information visit:](#)

Inflight Passenger Communications Coalition (IPCC) www.passengercommunications.org

CEA- Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) www.ce.org

CTIA-The Wireless Association www.ctia.org

The Satellite Industry Association (SIA) www.sia.org

The Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) www.tiaonline.org

Tech America www.techamerica.org