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Stimulus Bill Allocates Billions for Broadband and Smart Grid Technologies

Last week, Congress passed the \$787 billion economic stimulus bill, which allocated \$7.2 billion in grants and loans for broadband providers to roll out service to rural and underserved areas, and \$4.5 billion to the promotion of smart grid technologies. **Broadband:** The \$7.2 billion will be administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service. The bill requires the NTIA and FCC to develop nondiscrimination and interconnection rules. **Smart Grid:** The term "smart grid" refers to a modernized electricity network that uses digital technology to enhance a utility's ability to efficiently deliver electricity to consumers. One critical component of a smart grid system is a reliable communications network to support voice communications, automated meter reading, supply automation, and supply control and optimization. For more information, please contact Douglas Jarrett (Jarrett@khlaw.com; 202.434.4180).

FCC Preparing for Digital Transition

As previously reported, Congress recently delayed the deadline for the termination of analog signals from February 17 to June 12. Broadcasters were nevertheless afforded flexibility to make the transition early, and of the approximate 1,800 full-power television stations, 641 stations (about 36% of all full-power stations nationwide) will have terminated their analog signals by today. The four major networks- ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC- must keep at least one analog signal on the air to provide programming that includes at least local news and emergency information.

FCC Stays 700 MHz Narrowband Relocation Deadline

Last week, the FCC issued an Order staying the February 17, 2009 deadline for completing the relocation of narrowband operations to the new consolidated narrowband segment of the 700 MHz public safety band (769-775/799-805 MHz). The February 17 deadline was initially adopted under the assumptions that Auction 73 would yield a national D Block licensee who would negotiate a Network Sharing Agreement with the Public Safety Broadband Licensee with sufficient time to effect narrowband relocations prior to that date. Since that did not materialize, the FCC determined that an extension of the February 17 deadline was warranted.

Guard Band Licensee and Band Manager Annual Reports Due March 2

The eighth annual reports from 700 MHz Guard Band Licensees and the seventh annual report from Access 220, LLC, a 220 MHz Band Manager, are due March 2, 2009. Guard Band Licensees must provide specific information for each license held, as set forth in Section 27.607(c) of the Commission's regulations. The reports must be filed electronically.

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