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## **Senate Advances SAT Streamlining Act as FCC Continues Its Space Modernization Efforts**

On Feb. 12, 2026, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved [S. 3639, the Satellite and Telecommunications \(SAT\) Streamlining Act](#). This bipartisan bill aims to modernize and accelerate the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s satellite licensing processes. The legislation reflects growing congressional interest in ensuring that existing FCC timelines for reviewing and authorizing satellite applications match the rapid growth and complexity of commercial space activities. The bill's sponsors, Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) and Sen. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), emphasize the need for the United States to remain competitive in commercial space and satellite services, especially as international regulators implement expedited satellite licensing models.

### **Key Provisions: SAT Streamlining Act Changes to FCC Satellite Application Review**

The Committee-approved version of the SAT Streamlining Act directs the FCC to establish clear procedural timelines and criteria governing review of satellite license applications and market access requests. These provisions include:

- Codified “shot clocks” or milestone-based benchmarks for application review
- Defined procedural pathways for expedited review of satellite licensing requests
- Defined standards for extensions and tolling of review periods

- Enhanced internal FCC resource allocation to meet statutory processing requirements

Previously, the Committee delayed a vote on the bill after Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) the Committee's ranking member, raised concerns about the bill's "deemed granted" provision, which would have allowed applications to be approved if the FCC failed to affirmatively act within set timeframes. After negotiations, the Committee accepted an amendment to the bill, offered by Sen. Cantwell and Chairman Cruz, which modifies the "deemed granted" language and preserves FCC discretion and authority to deny, condition, or extend application reviews for concerns related to interference, orbital debris mitigation, safety, foreign ownership, or national security. However, the current bill requires the FCC to develop eligibility criteria for automatic approval within two years of enactment. In doing so, the agency must consider factors such as constellation size, spectrum bands, and the potential for harmful interference to incumbent users.

The bill maintains coordination requirements with federal spectrum users and affirms the need for technical review in shared or sensitive frequency bands. Existing interagency coordination obligations, including consultation with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) regarding spectrum allocated for federal use, would remain unchanged.

### **Legislative Process and Next Steps for SAT Streamlining Act**

The SAT Streamlining Act now advances to the full Senate for consideration. If approved by the Senate, S. 3639 will proceed to the House of Representatives – likely under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. No House companion bill currently exists. A similarly named piece of bipartisan legislation from the 118th Congress aimed at improving satellite licensing procedures ([H.R.1338](#)) failed to pass the House in July 2023, partly due to concerns over expanding FCC authority on space safety and orbital debris regulation.

### **FCC Space Modernization Rulemaking and Satellite Licensing Reforms**

The SAT Streamlining Act emerges against the backdrop of the FCC's ongoing Space Modernization rulemaking (SB Docket No. 25-306), which proposes replacing much of its existing Part 25 licensing framework with a new, consolidated Part 100 regime. The FCC's modernization efforts seek to create a modular and flexible licensing structure for emerging space technologies, new service models, and non-traditional satellite operations.

Key proposals include:

- Restructuring satellite application requirements
- Harmonizing service categories and modernizing technical rules
- Establishing predictable processing pathways for satellite licenses
- Adopting performance-based regulatory approaches and updated coordination mechanisms

If enacted, the SAT Streamlining Act would operate in parallel with — and potentially accelerate elements of — the Part 100 modernization. While the Act focuses on processing speed, Part 100 would address license structure, categorization, and long-term regulation. Stakeholders should monitor and evaluate both developments, as the combination could significantly reshape the satellite licensing landscape over the next 12–24 months.

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