

# Returning T-Band Spectrum to Public Safety

The IAFF supports the Don't Break Up the T-Band Act and urges Congress to pass legislation repealing the requirement for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to auction and reallocate the T-Band spectrum.

## BACKGROUND

In 2012, Congress mandated public safety licensees clear the T-Band frequencies (470-512 MHz) within two years, following a spectrum auction slated to occur in 2021. The auction was mandated as part of the legislation that established FirstNet as the entity to oversee the deployment and operation of a nationwide public safety broadband network. T-Band systems exist in 11 major metropolitan areas, including Boston, Chicago, Houston, Miami, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

Under the law, relocation of the public safety radio communications systems operating on the T-Band spectrum must occur. However, there is insufficient public safety narrowband spectrum available for this purpose in most of the large markets – a reality that has led to the use of T-Band spectrum in the first place.

Even if the allocation of the public safety spectrum is possible, the cost associated with shifting away from the T-Band is tremendous. This move is estimated to cost more than \$5.9 billion. Originally, it was envisioned these funds would be recouped from the auction of the T-Band spectrum. However, industry analysts are doubtful the auction revenues will raise enough funds to offset the costs incurred by cash-strapped public safety agencies.

Given the tremendous fiscal challenges and the absence of available spectrum for relocated public safety communications systems, Congress must repeal the requirement for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to reallocate and auction the T-Band spectrum.

## LEGISLATION

**House:** [HR 451, the Don't Break Up the T-Band Act of 2019](#)  
Sponsors: Representative Elliot Engel (D-NY); Representative Peter King (R-NY)

**Senate:** [S 2748, the Don't Break Up the T-Band Act of 2019](#)  
Sponsor: Senator Ed Markey (D-MA)

**Summary:** The Don't Break Up the T-Band Act of 2019 repeals the requirement for the Federal Communications Commission to reallocate and auction public safety T-Band spectrum.