



## **FCC Draft Order May Cut Tribal Access to Spectrum Licenses**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Federal Communications commission (FCC) is preparing for a new spectrum auction for AWS-3 licenses, which enable everything from 5G internet to emergency communications across the United States. Typically, a “tribal priority window” would have allowed any of the 575 federally recognized tribes, including the Navajo Nation, to acquire AWS-3 licenses ahead of commercial carriers. However, a [draft order](#) issued July 3, 2025, proposes eliminating any priority windows ahead of the auction, meaning tribes would not get early or special access to apply for free or discounted licenses before big corporations bid on them. In its draft order, the FCC states that current law only permits competitive auctions and does not authorize a tribal priority window—arguing that such a window could reduce government revenue.

This one-time re-auction of AWS-3 licenses was prompted by Dish Network’s return of their 200 previously held licenses. These licenses are especially valuable in urban areas outside major cities like New York, Boston and Chicago and receive bids from major internet service providers. However, some could serve the pressing need for improved telecommunications networks for tribes like the Navajo Nation, who reside in rural areas.

The Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT), which represents tribes has since [pushed back](#) on the draft order, asserting that tribes can’t compete with these massive corporations in auction and still need spectrum access for healthcare, education, law enforcement and emergency services. Nevertheless, voting on the draft order will take place during the FCC’s monthly meeting later this July 2025.