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FCC free Internet plan faces lawmaker opposition (Reuters)

Posted on Fri Dec 12, 2008 8:46AM EST

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A top Democratic lawmaker is expected to ask the Federal Communications Commission on Friday to delay voting on a controversial auction of radio spectrum, which includes a requirement for free Internet services, said a source following the issue in Washington.

The FCC is scheduled to consider the action, known as the AWS-3, at its meeting next on Thursday.

Cell phone companies, in particular Deutsche Telekom AG's T-Mobile, oppose the proposal, saying it will create interference, among other concerns. T-Mobile paid about \$4.2 billion for an adjacent piece of spectrum.

The FCC has said its engineers examined the issue and found no technical interference issues.

Democrat Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, who is expected to head the Senate Commerce Committee when the new Congress convenes in January, wants the FCC to refrain from taking up major items while it oversees the February 2009 transition to digital television.

On February 17, all U.S. television broadcasting must switch from analog to digital transmission under a congressional mandate. The change requires many Americans to buy a digital adapter for older television sets, while consumers who receive cable or satellite television will not be affected.

(Editing by Andre Grenon)

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