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## **Updates on the News**

*It's 2009 – Do you know where your spectrum is?* – Word around the FCC is that the Commission is hunting high and low for spectrum that it can allocate to the seemingly all-consuming broadband juggernaut that has enthralled the Genachowski Commission since it took over last summer. We plan to look more closely at this situation in coming months, but for now, all we can say is – watch out.

It should be clear to just about anybody who hasn't been in a coma for the last couple of months that BROADBAND is the only game in town as far as the Commission is concerned. And the goal seems to be to spread that game as far and as wide as possible. But that takes spectrum. (The Chairman has reportedly said that spectrum is the "oxygen" of the wireless world. That world, of course, is a major element of the ultimate broadband expansion.) And as we all know, they're not making new spectrum anymore.

So how does the FCC plan to feed to the voracious Broadband Beast all the spectrum that that beast may demand? That's the hard question we should be worrying about.

While no specific proposals have been floated yet, there have been a number of ominous signs. They started innocently enough last March, with the introduction of S. 649, a Senate bill calling for an inventory of all spectrum regulated by NTIA and the FCC. In explaining the bill, one of its sponsors (Senator Olympia Snowe) commented that "there is no new spectrum to allocate, only redistribute." Some reports have indicated that that bill was backed by Google, which would be a likely beneficiary of expanded broadband.

More recently, the Commission has issued a notice soliciting comments on where it might find spectrum to accommodate its broadband needs. That inquiry specifically alluded to the possibility of "moving spectrum allocations toward their highest and best use in the public interest". Hmmm.

And even more recently, the Commission announced the appointment of Steven Waldman to be in charge of an effort on the "future of media in a changing technological landscape". His responsibility: to make recommendations "designed to ensure a vibrant media landscape". Double hmmm.

Again, we'll be looking at all this in more detail in coming issues. There's no reason to panic yet – but there is plenty of reason to stay tuned.