

GPS Interference and the RETAIN Act

In 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) allowed Ligado, a satellite communications company, to repurpose portions of the L-band spectrum for their 5G network. Unfortunately, a portion of that L-band spectrum is in close proximity to frequencies used for high-precision GPS receivers essential for aviation and other sensitive applications. This proximity has sparked concerns across multiple federal agencies, including the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which argue that the tests and evidence relied upon by the FCC commission were inadequate to rule out failure modes that can result in adverse and possibly severe safety consequences.

The ***Recognizing and Ensuring Taxpayer Access to Infrastructure Necessary for GPS and Satellite Communications Act*** (RETAIN Act) was introduced in 2021 as a response to concerns about Ligado Networks' planned use of the L-band spectrum, which could interfere with GPS signals critical to public and private sectors. This bipartisan bill aimed to ensure that Ligado, not taxpayers, covers the costs of mitigating any interference its network might cause to GPS-enabled devices. The bill has garnered support from lawmakers and industry groups, highlighting the potential impacts on various sectors reliant on GPS, including agriculture, public safety, and transportation.

As of late 2024, the RETAIN Act has yet to be signed into law but continues to receive backing from groups concerned with GPS infrastructure security. The FCC has imposed some conditions on Ligado to address interference, but the RETAIN Act seeks broader protections, especially for consumer and business GPS-users not fully covered under current FCC mandates.

The Allied Pilots Association urges Congress to fully support GPS infrastructure by passing the RETAIN Act. This legislation will protect critical GPS-reliant industries from potential safety hazards caused by further spectrum encroachment.

For questions or additional information please email GAC-Chairman@alliedpilots.org