

**REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI
BEFORE PITTSBURGH RADIO BROADCASTERS' ROUNDTABLE**

JULY 24, 2013

It's great to be here today at KDKA, meeting with Pittsburgh broadcasters. I can't think of a better place to talk about radio. KDKA's history on the air can be traced all the way back to November 2, 1920. On that day, from a shack on the top of the K Building of Westinghouse's East Pittsburgh Plant in Turtle Creek, Leo Rosenberg announced live returns of the Presidential election between Warren G. Harding and James Cox. This broadcast was historic. Not only did it announce what I am pleased to note was a landslide Republican victory, it also heralded the dawn of a new age as America's first commercial radio broadcast.

After that first broadcast, KDKA didn't simply "jag around," to borrow a term of Pittsburghese. Instead, it kept innovating. KDKA broadcast the first professional baseball game right here in Pittsburgh. On August 5, 1921, Harold Arlin relayed the play-by-play as the Pirates beat the Phillies 8-5. The first-ever football broadcast came two months later as KDKA listeners heard the Pitt Panthers beat the West Virginia Mountaineers 21-13. Once again, Harold Arlin called the action.

Radio show formats that are commonplace today were developed right here, too. Do you enjoy listening to Randy Baumann on *The DVE Morning Show*? Well, the idea to use comedy to help wake up listeners was first developed by Rege Cordic on *Cordic & Company* in the 1950s. Guests like Omicron the alien and Carmen Monoxide the taxidermist made regular appearances. What about radio talk shows like *The Glen Meakem Program* on WPGB? Ed and Wendy King came up with the idea in 1951, and their *Party Line* program ran for 21 years. KDKA has pushed the envelope not just from a content perspective but also a technological one, debuting stereo sound on commercial AM in 1982.

Pittsburgh's pioneering achievements in radio aren't limited to KDKA. In 1948, for example, WHOD's Mary Dee Dudley became the first African-American female DJ in the United States. On her show, Mary played the latest records by African-American artists, introduced local talent, and interviewed national figures like Cab Calloway and Jackie Robinson.

Today, you can find excellent radio across the dial around Pittsburgh and throughout our nation. What began in that shack on top of the K Building has developed into the audible core of our national culture. Just like Pittsburgh's world record 446 bridges, radio connects people. Whether it's playing the latest track from Pittsburgh's own Christina Aguilera or Wiz Khalifa, reporting on local news, or providing play-by-play of a Penguins game, radio helps to build a city's cultural identity and is a critical source of local information. To broadcasters, localism isn't just a slogan; it's your way of doing business.

Like the legendary Steel Curtain, radio serves as an essential line of defense in times of emergency. From the St. Patrick's Day Flood of 1936 to the flooding that hit Pittsburgh just a few weeks ago, radio has proven itself to be a quick, efficient, and reliable means of getting emergency information out to the public in times of need. When other emergency sources fail, radio comes through. When the 2010 blizzards left over 130,000 people in the Pittsburgh area without power, battery-powered radios gave residents information about clean up, power restoration efforts, and where to go to seek shelter.

But I didn't come here today just to reminisce about the past or report on the present. Instead, I want to talk about the future. This afternoon, I want to hear your views on how we can ensure that what began in Pittsburgh in 1920 continues to be a vital part of our media landscape. And I'm particularly interested in learning what you think the FCC can do to help.

To get things started, let me highlight a few issues that have been on my mind. During my time in office, I've made it clear that I am a big fan of AM radio. But the AM band is facing significant challenges. Every day it gets harder to pick up a clear AM signal. The percentage of listening done on the AM dial has sharply declined, especially among the young. That's why I have called for the FCC to launch an AM Radio Revitalization Initiative. We need to comprehensively review our AM radio rules and explore proposals for improving the band. Over the course of the last ten months, I've heard great ideas from broadcasters across the country, and now is the time to take action. In recent weeks, I have had very productive discussions with FCC Chairwoman Mignon Clyburn about AM radio. She is a friend to broadcasters, and I am hopeful that we will see progress in the coming months.

In every field, it's important for the FCC to make sure that our regulations keep up with the times. But especially when it comes to radio, we're overdue for an overhaul. In fact, the last time we took a comprehensive look at our radio rules, Merrill Hoge was rushing the football and Louis Lipps was catching it. Just as the Steelers have long since moved on to Antonio Brown and Le'Veon Bell, we need to update our roster of rules, repealing the ones that no longer make the cut.

For instance, take the FCC's so-called "Contest Rule." Under this regulation, broadcasters have to give notice of all the nuts and bolts of any contest they run in periodic over-the-air-announcements. These announcements, needless to say, aren't the most compelling content in the world, and they can lead listeners to turn the dial. Maybe this once made sense. But not in today's point-and-click world, where listeners would rather go to a webpage to read the contest rules if they want to read them at all. That's exactly what broadcasters proposed as a replacement last year, and no one opposed this common-sense proposal. It's time for the FCC to take action on this issue and others like it.

I'm sure that plenty other obsolete regulations need our attention, and forums like this are one of the best ways to bring them to light. What other rules does the FCC need to "redd up"? All suggestions, big or small, are welcome. No questions are too "nebbly." As you can tell, I am really getting into this Pittsburgh English.

Before closing, I want to briefly mention the issue of media ownership. Congress mandates that the FCC review our media ownership rules every 4 years. We launched our last review in 2010, but we are now in the second half of 2013 and it still isn't done. This is unacceptable. It is time to bring our so-called Quadrennial Review to a close and to modernize our regulations to reflect the current media marketplace. One rule, in particular, that I want to eliminate is the newspaper-radio cross-ownership rule. In today's day and age, if you think that the combination of a newspaper and a radio station poses a real threat to competition and diversity, then I have one of Pittsburgh's 446 bridges that I'd like to sell you.

These are some of my thoughts, and I can't wait to hear yours. You bring to the table a wealth of experience from all facets of Pennsylvania radio. Pittsburghers aren't shy, so I look forward to our discussion. To quote one of America's favorite fictional radio hosts, Dr. Frasier Crane, "I'm listening."