

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI**

Re: *Rural Call Completion*, WC Docket No. 13-39.

Most Americans take three things for granted: death, taxes, and a telephone system that works. You dial a phone number, you hear a ring, and your call is completed. But for an increasing number of rural Americans, that's not the case. Calls are dropped. You get a busy signal even when no one is home. You dial a rural number and hear nothing but dead air for five or six seconds before the line disconnects. It almost seems like the most appropriate greeting when you call rural America nowadays should be, "Can you hear me now?"

This is unacceptable. Wherever you live—whether it's Pittsburg, Kansas, or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—and whatever technology you use—whether it's a landline, a cellphone, or VoIP—when your number is dialed, your phone should ring shortly thereafter.

Consumers, state commissions, and rural telephone companies have expended a lot of effort bringing rural call completion problems to our attention. So I'm glad that the FCC is finally taking action to address this issue. With today's *Order*, the Commission will start collecting data so we can better understand the difficulties involved. And armed with that information, we will be in a position to take action against those responsible.

I am especially pleased that my colleagues were willing to incorporate many of my suggestions to improve the item. By aligning the safe harbor with established best practices and reducing the burden of compliance, we create stronger incentives for carriers to be good actors.¹ By giving affiliated providers flexibility in recording and reporting their data, we reduce the administrative hassle our rules might otherwise cause.² By targeting our recordkeeping on rural calls, we cut the cost of compliance by 90 percent.³ And by promising to reexamine our rules within three years, we ensure that the data isn't collected only to itself collect digital dust on a Commission hard drive.⁴ Instead, the data will be used to ensure that our rules reflect current marketplace realities—a maxim that should apply to every area under the agency's purview.

Of course, today's action alone is unlikely to solve the call completion problems that have plagued rural America. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues on future efforts. Many others are on the beat, too. The staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau, the Enforcement Bureau, and the Office of General Counsel deserve thanks for getting us this far. The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, the National Exchange Carrier Association, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, and many others are working hard to improve the quality of calls to rural America as well. Through our collective efforts and aided by the information we will receive as a result of this order, I hope that we will solve the rural call completion problem as soon as possible.

¹ See *Order* at paras. 90–101.

² See *id.* at para. 25.

³ See *id.* at para. 49.

⁴ See *id.* at paras. 109–10.