

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI**

Re: *Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System*, PS Docket No. 15-94; *Wireless Emergency Alerts*, PS Docket No. 15-91.

President Harry S. Truman established our nation's first emergency broadcast system. He gave it a name that in hindsight sounds like it was plucked from the classic television show *Get Smart*: It was called "CONELRAD," which stood for Control of Electromagnetic Radiation. That early system directed the public to tune their radios to 640 or 1240 on the AM dial so that the President could address the nation in the event of an attack.¹

Its name has changed a few times over the years, and its capabilities have expanded. But the emergency alert system (EAS) still serves the basic and important purpose of providing the American public with timely access to emergency information. This past year alone, our federal, state, and local partners sent out over 25,000 alerts in communities across the country, including severe weather alerts, missing child notifications, and other emergency information. So I am pleased that this *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (*Notice*) will explore ways we can strengthen and improve our alerting system.

I am particularly pleased that the *Notice* now includes a section that asks some fundamental questions about the structure of our alerting system. Right now, EAS messages are transmitted in one of two ways: either through the traditional, broadcast-based EAS protocol or through a newer, Internet-based protocol. Does it make sense to maintain these two approaches for redundancy or other purposes? Or should we switch to a single distribution method?

We also seek comment more broadly on whether our alerting system is appropriately tailored to today's communications landscape. Do we need to rethink the basic structure of our system in light of advances in technology? Or is the current system flexible enough to continue to serve as our alerting platform going forward? Vital questions all, and I'm glad that we're now asking them.

As important as what's in the document is what's not. The *Notice* no longer seeks comment on imposing regulations on over-the-top ("OTT") providers in a way that would have tilted the regulatory playing field against a subset of those providers. Given the nascent, competitive, and dynamic nature of the OTT market, I thought it was important to move forward in a more balanced manner, and I appreciate the compromise struck on this point. As we modernize the system, we must be mindful of how our regulations might impact the market for IP-based offerings.

Finally, I want to thank the staff of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, including Steven Carpenter, Gregory Cooke, Lisa Fowlkes, Nicole McGinnis, Zenji Nakazawa, Admiral Simpson, and James Wiley for their hard work on this item.

¹ Notably, the CONELRAD system directed Americans to tune their radios to those two channels so that foreign bombers could not home in on a particular city based on the frequency used by a local radio station.