

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI
AT THE FIRSTNET SIGNING CEREMONY**

WASHINGTON, DC

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One of government's most important functions is keeping its people safe. That is a challenge in the digital age. Among other things, 9/11 showed us that we have gaps when it comes to our public safety communications systems. And those gaps can make the difference between life and death.

Congress addressed this problem in 2012 when it sought the creation of a nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network—an initiative now known as FirstNet. I know elected officials, public safety officials, and others recognized at the time how much work had to be done. But they embraced the spirit of Lao Tzu, the ancient Chinese philosopher, who said that “a journey of 1000 miles begins with one step.”

Step by step, they—we—are getting there. I'm honored today to join Secretary Ross and Chairman Greg Walden in congratulating FirstNet. To its Board, led by Chairwoman Sue Swenson; to its President, T.J. Kennedy; and to its CEO, Mike Poth, thank you for your efforts that led to where we are today.

Today's signing ceremony is the capstone to many years of hard work by the public safety community. So I'd like to thank them as well, and especially Chief Harlan McEwen, for helping get us to this point. I'd also like to thank all of those in Congress who acted on a bipartisan basis to get this project off of the ground. And finally, I'd like to congratulate AT&T for being selected as the entity that will build out the network.

The FCC remains committed to supporting FirstNet and the public safety community. We've given FirstNet a license for 20 MHz of broadband spectrum in the 700 MHz band. We transmitted basic technical requirements to FirstNet for the network. And our spectrum auctions have produced billions of dollars that will be used to fund construction of the public safety network. Going forward, we look forward to working with FirstNet and doing what we can to help ensure the success of this project.

Each and every day, we count on public safety professionals. They put their lives on the line so that we can be safe. That's why we owe it to these heroes to provide them with the tools they need to get their jobs done. And a first-class public safety communications network is one such tool.

I'm pleased to be with you this morning to celebrate this significant achievement. The journey of a thousand miles may not be over yet, but this is a major milestone toward getting there.