

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Accelerating Wireline Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment*, WC Docket No. 17-84.

Building a fixed broadband network is hard and expensive. There's no better way to understand this than by seeing it for yourself. I've done that during my time at the FCC. I've visited Baldwin City, Kansas to learn how RG Fiber has connected small towns in the Sunflower State with high-speed broadband. I've sunk my shoes into the muck outside Hammond, Louisiana, where Southern Light was stringing fiber along the bayou. Just last month, I spent time with Rocket Fiber in Detroit, where I saw how a scrappy upstart is delivering badly-needed digital infrastructure to the Motor City.

From these competitive fiber providers and many others, I've heard a similar refrain: their work is difficult, sometimes prohibitively so. You need a lot of capital. You need capable work crews. And as important as either of these, you need a regulatory framework that enables you to build a business case for building a business. Without rules that keep costs low and encourage deployment, the RG Fibers and Southern Lights and Rocket Fibers won't get off the ground—and consumers will never benefit from the competition they're trying to bring to the broadband marketplace.

That brings us to today's rulemaking, which rests on a simple premise: When you make it easier and cheaper to build high-speed networks, companies are more likely to build those networks. Unreasonably high costs and excessive delays to access poles and costly and cumbersome permitting processes can make it extremely difficult to deploy infrastructure. With today's *Notice*, we seek comment on creative and common-sense solutions to solve these problems.

In addition, we focus on revising FCC rules that unnecessarily slow down the transition from old, fading 20<sup>th</sup> century networks to new, resilient 21<sup>st</sup> century networks. For example, some of these rules actually *doubled* the waiting period for retiring copper plant, some of which has been in the ground since the Roosevelt Administration. This directly harms consumers desperate for better Internet access and more competition. That's because every dollar that the FCC forces companies to spend maintaining obsolete, low-capacity copper lines is a dollar that cannot be spent deploying high-capacity fiber and other next-generation technologies. That's why, in today's *Notice*, we examine ways to modernize our rules and America's broadband infrastructure along with them.

Last but not least, thank you to the terrific staff across the agency who put in so much hard work on this item: Michele Berlove, Jim Carr, Adam Copeland, Madeleine Findley, Lisa Griffin, Dan Kahn, Chris Killion, Doug Klein, Dick Kwiatkowski, Paul Lafontaine, Rick Mallen, Rosemary McEnery, Bakari Middleton, Kris Monteith, Ramesh Nagarajan, Terri Natoli, Omar Nayeem, Claudia Pabo, Michael Ray, Bill Richardson, Zach Ross, Lisa Saks, Deborah Salons, Katja Seim, and John Visclosky. Consumers in places like Baldwin City and Detroit and Hammond might not know the details of what you have accomplished today, but they'll benefit substantially from your work in the future.