

**TESTIMONY OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

**ON NOMINATION TO SERVE ON
THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

JULY 19, 2017

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. For over five years, it has been an honor to work with many of you on a wide variety of issues. And should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to continuing to do so in the years to come.

I would like to recognize members of my family in attendance: my wife, Janine; our children, Alexander and Annabelle; and my brother-in-law, Robert Van Lancker, and his fiancée, Rachel Vistica. I'm grateful to all of them for their love and support. I would like to give a special thank you to my parents, Varadaraj and Radha Pai, who have travelled from Kansas to be with me today. Forty-six years ago, they emigrated from India to the United States, bringing with them little more than ten dollars and a transistor radio. Without their sacrifices, I would not be where I am today.

I also would like to thank President Trump for nominating me to serve another term at the Commission.

Finally, I want to congratulate Jessica Rosenworcel and Brendan Carr for being nominated to be members of the Commission. Each has served at the agency with great distinction for several years. If confirmed, they will bring a wealth of communications expertise to our labors.

Over the past several years, you have come to know me and where I stand. Over the past several months, you have been able to see some of the work the FCC has prioritized, from closing the digital divide to making the agency more open and transparent, from combatting illegal robocalls to modernizing the Commission's rules. I'm sure we will discuss those efforts this morning.

But I'd like to share some perspectives from outside the Beltway. One of my favorite poems is Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road." In one passage, Whitman writes this of the people he has met: "I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go, I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them, I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return."

I can understand what Whitman meant. For I've had the privilege of meeting countless people during my time at the FCC, both in Washington and around the country. Their stories stay with me. I carry them with me wherever I go, likely more often than they know. And they fuel my passion to help deliver digital opportunity to all Americans and advance the public interest.

I carry with me Stephen Pourier. During my visit to the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation in Mission, South Dakota, he told me about a woman on his reservation who was found dead in her home, clutching her cellphone. She had dialed for help 38 times—but never got a response because there was no wireless coverage.

I carry with me Lisa Kleinhandler and Cris Young, two hardworking women who run Hudson Fasteners, a family-owned company that goes back to 1946 and is now based in Youngstown, Ohio. Up until the 1990s, it sold things like nuts, bolts, and screws in a bricks-and-mortar store and kept inventory on notecards. Today, Lisa and Cris have created an online sales platform that, as they say, "put[s] the FAST in fasteners."

I carry with me Eric Hott of Kirby, West Virginia. Eric runs a chocolate business that is held back by the lack of broadband, which makes it harder for Eric to keep in touch with customers who want to be informed online.

I carry with me Mike Roth of 2i Feeders. Mike runs a feedlot in Allen, Kansas that uses broadband-based technologies to monitor every cow's unique intake at all times. That way, he can assure particular, top-end buyers that his beef is of the highest quality.

I carry with me Chelsea Pickner, a talented fashion entrepreneur in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. A few years ago, Chelsea had the foresight to create an online presence for her company. Today, thanks to broadband, she now sells her stylish wares to customers around the country and abroad and is creating local jobs.

I carry with me Sanjit Biswas, an engineer who co-founded a Bay Area startup called Samsara. Samsara deploys sophisticated sensors that allow companies like Chobani and Cowgirl Creamery to monitor storage and distribution temperature and humidity in real-time, to save drivers from having to do paperwork, and to efficiently manage trucking fleets.

I carry with me Priya Narasimhan, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University. Several years ago, inspired by her inability to see the action at a Pittsburgh Penguins game, she founded YinzCam. The company creates apps for sports teams and venues and sets up beacons that deliver highly-localized information to fans. Its clients now include many NFL, NBA, NCAA, and NHL teams—including her beloved Penguins. (It was also gratifying to me as an Indian-American to hear her story; her family came to America via India and Zambia, and she is a great role model for Indian-Americans and women in STEM fields.)

I carry with me Gabe Hopper, who's working at a startup in Reno, Nevada called Ustyme. Ustyme enables users to pick an online book, video-call another user, and read the book interactively together—something that appeals to me as a father of two young children.

I carry with me Dr. Shazam Hussain of the Cleveland Clinic's mobile stroke unit. Dr. Hussain explained how a stroke patient's brain loses two million brain cells every minute and how connectivity has allowed the Clinic's stroke unit to cut the average time for assessment and stabilization of a patient by an incredible *38 minutes*.

I carry with me Dr. Rick Embrey, Chief Medical Officer at Augusta Health in Fishersville, Virginia. Dr. Embrey and his team showed me how emergency room doctors and nurses leverage connectivity and technology to assess patients before they arrive, and how they've developed a software tool for real-time patient monitoring that has cut mortality rates from sepsis by 34%.

I carry with me Javier Peña, who was teaching an eighth grade class at the San Fernando Institute for Applied Media in California. He asked his students to research the term "tessellation" on their iPads (using the school's Wi-Fi network), to describe what they saw, and then outline why they thought Islamic art and architecture used tessellation so extensively.

I carry with me the students and instructors at Iḷisaġvik College in Barrow, Alaska. In addition to sharing some muktuk (whale skin and blubber) with me, they shared how important Internet access and technology was for them to be able to learn and to preserve their Alaska Native heritage.

I carry with me Mike Bosch, Andy Newton, Travis Carter, and Marc Hudson. Respectively, they help run competitive fiber providers RG Fiber in Kansas, Southern Light along the Gulf Coast, US Internet in Minnesota, and Rocket Fiber in Detroit. I've seen for myself how they are building high-speed fiber networks in places as small as Baldwin City, Kansas and as large as the Motor City. And I've even had a chance to get on a rig and string some fiber in the bayou outside Hammond, Louisiana and on a densely-populated block in Minneapolis.

I carry with me Gwynne Shotwell, who is literally a rocket scientist. At SpaceX, she and her team are pioneering commercial space exploration, including sending communications satellites into space and creating rockets that can be reused—a technical feat that was once thought impossible, a massive cost saving, and a portent of broadband innovation to come.

I carry with me Wayne Gilmore, who helps run KLKC 1540 AM and 93.5 FM. I grew up with this radio station, and can still hear former sports announcer and DJ Steve Lardy's voice calling the 1987 5A high school basketball championship game. Wayne and others are enabling a new generation of Parsonians to make their own lifelong connections with the station and town.

I carry with me Danny Thomas, the President and General Manager of KOAM-TV in Joplin, Missouri. I grew up with this TV station, among others, and came to value the work of dedicated journalists like Dowe Quick. Danny ensures that the station reflects the best traditions of broadcast localism, such as round-the-clock coverage and community service when the deadly EF-5 tornado hit town in 2011. Oh, and Dowe is still reporting the news!

I carry with me Pervis Parker, the general manager of WLOO, a television station in Jackson, Mississippi owned by Tougaloo College, a historically African-American college. Pervis told me that WLOO has upgraded to HD, produces its own content, carries programming created by and targeting African-Americans, and trains student-interns to become the next generation of minority broadcasters.

I carry with me Pat Gottsch. A native of small-town Nebraska, Pat created Rural Free Delivery Television, or RFD-TV—the country's first and only 24-hour, rural-focused television network. I've been on RFD-TV's set in Nashville, Tennessee, where reporter Janet Adkison kindly allowed me to interrupt the day's commodities reports in order to discuss my ideas for FCC-led rural development.

I carry with me Alex Algard and the team at Hiya, a Seattle-based company which helps tens of millions of consumers avoid unwanted robocalls and tracks the origin of these calls. And speaking of robocalls, I carry with me Florence Friedman of New York City. She wrote to me, calling robocalls “the wild west, an area of lawlessness. . . . Hopefully, you will put this high on your agenda. It really is disruptive to one's life. . . . We deserve peace and quiet—and yes, even security. Please do something!”

I carry with me Gallaudet University's Dr. Christian Vogler, Director of the Technology Access Program, Research Associate Paula Tucker, and Senior Research Engineer Norman Williams. They've done amazing work on real-time text, which helps people with disabilities communicate in a much more natural way using Internet Protocol-based technology.

I carry with me Ed Owens and Robby Moore, the mayors of South Boston, Virginia and Lobelville, Tennessee. Each explained how rural Internet access was critical to linking small-town residents with economic and educational opportunities.

I carry with me Captain Robert Johnson, a former officer at Lee Correctional Institution in Bishopville, South Carolina. I had the honor of meeting him at a forum hosted by then-Governor Nikki Haley. In 2010, a gunman kicked in the door of his home and shot him six times in the stomach and chest. Why? Inmates were upset that Captain Johnson repeatedly foiled their efforts to smuggle in contraband cellphones. Ironically, they used one to order the hit on him.

I carry with me Hank Hunt. In 2013, Hank's daughter, Kari, and her three children met her estranged husband in a Marshall, Texas hotel room. Her husband immediately began stabbing her. Kari's nine-year-old daughter, who had accompanied her, tried repeatedly to dial 911 from the room's telephone, but the number didn't go through—because she first had to dial “9.” Hank couldn't save Kari's life, but he made it a mission to save others by pushing for direct access to 911. Legislation supported in this Committee bears Kari's name. And the FCC too has helped by urging hotels to update their systems to allow guests to immediately reach emergency personnel.

I carry with me Denise Holcomb, the 911 Director of Clay County, West Virginia. During major flooding just before my visit last summer, she and her staff handled calls from desperate county residents—even as floodwaters entered the call center itself. I could still see the residue of mud and water on the walls. At the end of our visit, she observed with a matter of fact tone that they simply did what they had to do to help and gave me a hug.

I carry with me Mark Mew, Chief of the Anchorage Police Department. He explained how communications helped his officers protect fellow Alaskans and patrol more efficiently.

And last but certainly not least, I carry with me my co-workers at the FCC. I love this agency. I've spent most of the last decade there. That's largely because of its wonderful, hardworking staff. It is such a privilege to work alongside and get to know them. And I'm so touched by the messages they send me from time to time. Near my desk, I keep a note from Debra Jordan, a talented staffer in our Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. She wrote me, unsolicited, "Chairman Pai, your comments to the FCC staff shortly after your appointment as the new Chairman reaffirmed your personal and professional respect for all peoples . . . regardless of their backgrounds or status. Thank you for keeping the FCC a respectful environment in which to work."

These are just a few of the people, and just a few of the stories, that I carry with me every day. As I work in my office, as Whitman put it, "it is impossible for me to get rid of them." Indeed, "I am fill'd with them." And should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed by the Senate, I will do my best to ensure that the FCC "fill[s] them in return" by empowering them to help Americans everywhere improve their lives through communications and technology.

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, and Members of the Committee, thank you once again for holding this hearing. I look forward to answering your questions and working with you to promote the public interest.