



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 8, 2018

The Honorable Stevan Pearce
U.S. House of Representatives
2432 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Pearce:

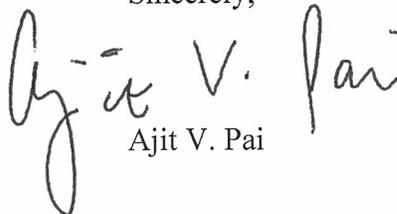
Thank you for your letter concerning the Commission's recent Order on operating-expense limitations on Tribal lands and its impact on Mescalero Apache Telecom, Inc. (Mescalero). To be sure, the Commission's April 2018 Order, which allows certain rate-of-return carriers serving Tribal communities to recover higher levels of operational expenses from the Universal Service Fund, will result in additional funding to deploy both voice and broadband services on Tribal lands. I agree, however, that the Order did not go far enough in extending support to more carriers that serve Tribal lands, including Mescalero.

Indeed, the final Order voted by the Commission was not the same Order I originally proposed in February 2017, a few weeks after I became Chairman. In the interest of finally getting something done after many months, I chose to find agreement with those commissioners who were willing to work in good faith on ways to help at least some carriers serving Tribal lands. Although the Order may not provide support to all carriers serving Tribal lands, the action will enhance the ability of many carriers to bring digital opportunity to communities on Tribal lands.

Of course, more needs to be done. That's why, for example, the Commission recently agreed to solicit public input on the adoption of a Tribal Broadband Factor, which would provide additional financial assistance to carriers serving Tribal lands.

I appreciate your interest in promoting broadband deployment in Tribal areas and throughout the country, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to close the digital divide. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".
Ajit V. Pai