



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 2, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Pallone:

Thank you for your letter about the Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) September 2018 report regarding broadband access on Tribal lands. Closing the digital divide is the Federal Communications Commission's top priority. As you observe, nowhere is that divide more starkly pronounced than in Indian Country. This is a situation that needs to change, and I am committed to changing it.

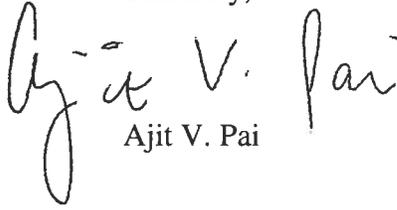
The Commission aims to ensure that we collect the best possible data with respect to broadband access on Tribal lands and is working to address each of the three recommendations advanced by the GAO. As described in their August 22, 2018 response to the GAO's draft report, the Chiefs of the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau and Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau highlighted numerous efforts the Commission is already undertaking to develop better data on broadband service on Tribal lands. Central to these efforts is the Commission's ongoing rulemaking proceeding in which we are exploring revisions to our Form 477 collection of broadband deployment data in order to increase the accuracy and usefulness of that data. Recognizing the potential benefits of increased granularity, including those you point out, we sought input on revising our methodology for assessing service coverage. We are committed to making changes that will improve our understanding of broadband deployment across America, including in Tribal areas, and are analyzing various options for data collection with that goal in mind. We have also begun the process of compiling a report and starting a subsequent rulemaking on related issues, as required by RAY BAUM'S Act of 2018.

As we move forward with these efforts, I have asked staff to expand their ongoing engagement with Tribal stakeholders so that their views and insights more fully inform our efforts to identify and develop measures to address, unserved Tribal areas. I personally have participated extensively in such engagement, having consulted with Tribal officials everywhere from the Navajo Nation to the Rosebud Sioux Reservation to the National College of American Indians' Mid-Year Conference in Connecticut and met with numerous Tribal representatives at the FCC's headquarters (including, just a few weeks ago, the Native Nations Communications Task Force). In addition to that, the Commission's substantive decision-making has been meaningfully informed by Tribal participation. For example, Tribal governments were able to participate directly in the Mobility Fund Phase II challenge process—a process that is helping guide the FCC's determination of where to direct subsidies necessary for mobile broadband deployment. And as part of our ongoing engagement with Tribes, we plan to seek input from Tribes and service providers on the Commission's 2012 statement on Tribal engagement, consistent with the Report's recommendation.

Page 2—The Honorable Frank Pallone

I appreciate your continued interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 2, 2019

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
U.S. House of Representatives
1319 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Ruiz:

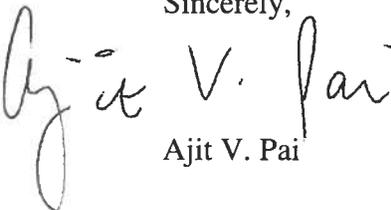
Thank you for your letter about the Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) September 2018 report regarding broadband access on Tribal lands. Closing the digital divide is the Federal Communications Commission's top priority. As you observe, nowhere is that divide more starkly pronounced than in Indian Country. This is a situation that needs to change, and I am committed to changing it.

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