

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI  
AT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY AND  
DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT BROADCAST SYMPOSIUM**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**MARCH 7, 2019**

Good morning! Welcome to the FCC's Symposium on Media Diversity.

Thanks to everyone for coming. We've got a great day lined up for you.

But before I get to the program, a little bit of history. On my first full day as FCC Chairman, I spoke to the Commission's staff in this very room and said that my highest priority would be bringing the benefits of the digital age to all Americans—regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or anything else.

Consistent with this pledge, I moved quickly to re-charter the agency's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment, which had gone dormant. When it was chartered in July 2017, I charged the Committee's leaders with developing real-world solutions to spur diversity and digital empowerment in under-served communities.

I asked them to bring recommendations that could be quickly implemented in order to get solutions to the public rapidly.

One of the deliverables to come out of this Advisory Committee is today's workshop. And have they ever delivered!

To start, we've got a special guest, NBC News White House Correspondent Kristen Welker, who will be giving the featured remarks of this opening session.

We also have eight all-star panels on tap. You will hear from experts in broadcast radio and television, over-the-top content providers, finance, media mergers and acquisitions, and groups that specialize in training those interested in media employment and ownership.

Building out eight panels takes a lot of work, and that means I've got a lot of people to thank.

First, I want to thank the Advisory Committee's entire Broadcast Diversity and Development Working Group for its great planning efforts, and especially, the Chair of the Working Group, former FCC Commissioner Henry Rivera. Henry and the working group have done a terrific job in putting together a wonderful program in such a short period of time, including several weeks when the FCC team was furloughed.

Thanks also to Diane Sutter and Anna Gomez, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee, for their outstanding leadership.

Thank you to all the experts who will participate in our panels, including the moderators, for all the advance preparation for today's event.

Thanks also to our team here at the FCC, including the Media Bureau, led by Chief Michelle Carey, along with Deputy Bureau Chief Sarah Whitesell and Industry Analysis Chief Brendan Holland; the Designated Federal Officer, Jamila Bess Johnson, and Deputy DFO Brenda Villanueva; the Office of Communications Business Opportunities, led by Chief Sanford Williams; and the many other staff

members who have worked so hard to make this symposium a success, in particular those who enabled us to use this Commission Meeting Room today.

Finally, thanks to three of my colleagues, Commissioners O’Rielly, Carr, and Starks, who are also here this morning. Make no mistake: promoting opportunities for women and minorities in broadcasting is a bipartisan issue at the Commission.

This work can have a lasting impact. On Monday, I had the privilege of speaking at the Women in Cable Telecommunications’ 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. I pointed out that empowering women to turn their potential into power in the communications sector is good for women, good for business—and good for America’s future. The best evidence of that last point was hearing an African-American female executive describe how she had an interest in learning about engineering as a child; how she pursued that interest in school; how she was now leading in a prominent media distribution company; and critically, how she was determined to pay it forward by sharing her story with young women (including her own daughter, who I met) in order to enable them to dream big and set their ceilings high. It was inspiring to hear, and it was a useful reminder that the communications sector holds special promise for *all* Americans to achieve their dreams.

Aside from today’s workshop, the Advisory Committee has been keeping busy on other initiatives. Its Broadcast Diversity and Development Working Group coordinated very comprehensive comments on our proposed broadcast incubator program. Their comments were a big help as we developed and eventually adopted the program last summer.

We anticipate being able to begin accepting applications to participate in the incubator program later this spring. This will be a big step forward toward increasing diverse participation in broadcasting. By that time, we hope to have all the forms and processes in place to launch the program. If anyone wants more information now to prepare for that application process, we have some materials available today, and we hope you’ll also visit the FCC webpage on the incubator program. We’ve already done one webinar on the nuts and bolts of how the program works, which you can see on that website, and we’ll continue to do more outreach.

I hope today might even be an opportunity for existing broadcasters who are in a position to help to connect with small broadcasters in attendance and to start thinking about partnerships. Many of the moderators and panelists today are experts in finance and broadcasting. They are wonderful resources for those of you who may be interested in applying to participate in the Commission’s incubator program.

Here’s the bottom line. I hope that this workshop makes a difference for you, personally and professionally. Take time to introduce yourself to others here, network, and make connections. This symposium is for you.

One last piece of business before I hand things over. As I mentioned earlier, we initially chartered the Advisory Committee in July 2017 for a two-year period. I’m pleased to announce today that I will start the process to re-charter this advisory committee next month. I can promise you this: The Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment is a real asset to the Commission and to the country, and it won’t wither away on my watch. On behalf of the agency, we are grateful to all the members of the current committee and working groups for their hard work and commitment to these important issues.

Now, it’s my pleasure to turn it over to our featured speaker, Kristen Welker. Ms. Welker is more accustomed to the rarified air of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. So we’re grateful that she could find her way to our humble independent agency in Southwest Washington. I had the pleasure of meeting Kristen this morning, and I think it’s safe to say that she has seen it all in her intrepid career in

broadcasting, from local news on both coasts to covering the White House today. In doing just that—showing up and working hard—she’s been a terrific advocate on the broadcast diversity issues that we’ll hear more about today. Please join me in welcoming Kristen Welker.