

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Auction of Toll Free Numbers in the 833 Code; Comment Sought on Competitive Bidding Procedures*, AU Docket No. 19-101, WC Docket No. 17-192, CC Docket No. 95-155.

In the second season of *Seinfeld*, Elaine is tired of waiting for one of the few tables at a popular Chinese restaurant to open up. She laments, “It’s not fair that people are seated first-come, first-served. It should be based on who’s hungriest.”¹

While Elaine’s idea may not have taken off in the realm of Chinese cuisine, here at the FCC, we’ve recognized that first-come, first-served may not be the best way to allocate scarce resources, such as toll-free numbers. That’s why we decided last year to experiment with allowing numbers in the recently-opened 833 toll free code to be assigned through an auction. The 833 Auction will make available over 17,000 numbers for which there have been competing requests. It will let us see whether competitive bidding is an equitable and efficient way to distribute toll free numbers, which should be useful as we assign toll free numbers in the future.

Today, we take a critical step toward holding this first-of-its-kind auction by proposing and seeking comment on detailed procedures for conducting and participating in the 833 Auction. Specifically, we seek public input on application requirements, bidding procedures, and post-auction procedures to promote the transparency, efficiency, and integrity of the 833 Auction. We also make clear that non-profit health and safety organizations and government entities can petition the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau to exclude 833 numbers from the auction for health and safety purposes.

For their diligent work on this experiment, I’d like to thank Joseph Calascione, Rita Cookmeyer, Scott Mackoul, Eliot Maenner, Giulia McHenry, Gary Michaels, Martha Stancill, and Margie Weiner from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Pamela Arluk, Matthew Collins, Alex Espinoza, Justin Faulb, Heather Hendrickson, Kris Monteith, and Ann Stevens from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Terry Cavanaugh, Rick Mallen, Linda Oliver, Bill Richardson, John Williams, and Chin Yoo from the Office of General Counsel; and Maura McGowan from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.

¹ “The Chinese Restaurant,” *Seinfeld*, Season 2, Episode 11 (May 23, 1991), available at http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/Ghent/clips/the%20Chinese%20Restaurant_standing_line.mp4/view.