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**For Immediate Release**

**FCC CHAIRMAN VISITS OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOP WHICH IS RECEIVING \$22.2 MILLION FOR RURAL BROADBAND**

***FCC Connect America Fund Support Expected to Support Deployment of Gigabit Connections to Over 7,700 Rural Oklahoma Locations***

WASHINGTON, May 22, 2019—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today visited East Central Electric Cooperative in Okmulgee, Oklahoma to discuss how a recent FCC investment will help connect rural Oklahomans to high-speed internet service. East Central is receiving \$22.2 million to deploy gigabit connections to over 7,700 locations in rural Oklahoma.

“Bridging the digital divide is my top priority at the FCC. I’m pleased that East Central Electric Coop will help close that divide by using FCC support to connect rural Oklahomans,” said Chairman Pai. “Gigabit-speed connections will give Oklahoma residents and small businesses all the economic and social benefits of broadband, such as telemedicine, precision agriculture, online education, and entrepreneurship.”

“We’re honored to host Chairman Pai at the cooperative to share how we are bringing broadband to our member-consumers because of the funds awarded through the recent Connect America Fund auction held by the FCC,” said Tim Smith, General Manager of East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

This is part of the first wave of funding for rural broadband from the FCC’s Connect America Fund Phase II auction. Providers will begin receiving funding this month. In total, the auction allocated \$1.488 billion in Universal Service Fund support to expand broadband to more than 713,000 unserved rural homes and small businesses over the next 10 years. In addition, this deployment is costing taxpayers much less than initially projected because the Commission allocated this funding through competitive bidding among providers using a variety of technologies.

Providers must build out to 40% of the assigned homes and businesses in a state within three years. Buildout must increase by 20% in each subsequent year, until complete buildout is reached at the end of the sixth year.

The Connect America Fund Phase II auction is part of a broader effort by the FCC to close the digital divide in rural America. In addition to the funding that will be provided by this auction, the Commission recently provided 186 companies in 43 states with \$65.7 million in additional annual funding to upgrade broadband speeds in rural communities, and offered incentives for over 500 rural carriers to provide faster broadband to over one million rural homes and

businesses. Chairman Pai also announced his intention to create the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, which will provide \$20.4 billion over the next decade to connect up to four million rural homes and businesses to high-speed broadband, representing the FCC's single biggest step yet to close the digital divide.

More information is available on the auction is available at <https://www.fcc.gov/auction/903>. A map of winning bids is available at <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/caf2-auction903-results/>.

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*