



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

May 13, 2019

The Honorable Dave Loebsack  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1211 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Loebsack:

Thank you for your letter regarding the importance of affordable and reliable broadband in communities with limited access. Closing the digital divide, especially in rural parts of America, is my top priority—and one that the Commission is working on all fronts to support. I've seen how the business case for deployment too often doesn't exist without federal help. That's why we've been pursuing an aggressive agenda to expand high-speed Internet access in rural America.

For example, through our ground-breaking Connect America Fund Phase II reverse auction, we're awarding about \$1.5 billion to connect over 713,000 homes and small businesses nationwide with fixed broadband. This will make a big difference. Last fall, when I visited Vermont's Northern Kingdom, I saw for myself how important broadband is for rural development in places like Greensboro, Springfield, and St. Johnsbury. And just last month, I met with representatives of electric cooperatives from across the country who will deliver gigabit fiber to previously unserved rural areas, enabling things like telemedicine and precision agriculture—and strengthening rural communities.

Last December, we also reformed our Alternative Connect America Model, or A-CAM program. Specifically, we offered many small, rural carriers more funding in return for deploying faster broadband to more rural locations. As a result of these offers, we announced last month that an additional 106,000 rural homes and small businesses will get faster broadband. That's a 31.8% increase in the number of locations receiving broadband of at least 25/3 Mbps speeds through the A-CAM program.

We've also begun requiring that small, rural carriers that still rely on the FCC's legacy mechanism provide faster broadband to more rural locations. Under the prior Administration's rules, these carriers were only required to provide 10/1 service to around 115,000 locations. Under our new rules, these same carriers will have to provide at least 25/3 broadband to more than 600,000 locations. At the same time, we initiated a second round of A-CAM offers to these carriers. If all accept, they will have to provide 25/3 service to at least 1.1 million new locations.

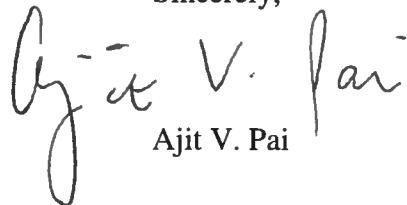
I also agree with you that ensuring providers live up to their promises of broadband performance in rural areas is essential to achieving the goals of universal service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That's why the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, and the Office of Engineering and Technology established a uniform framework for

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measuring the speed and latency performance for recipients of Connect America Fund support last July. This framework requires providers to submit testing results to promote greater accountability for recipients of high-cost universal service funds, while attempting to avoid unnecessary burdens on smaller carriers. I agree with you that for this framework to function, providers will need a meaningful opportunity to implement and test solutions. Commission staff are completing their review of several pending petitions for reconsideration, and I expect we will move forward with a decision in the coming weeks.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ajit V. Pai".

Ajit V. Pai



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WASHINGTON

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THE CHAIRMAN

May 13, 2019

The Honorable Peter Welch  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2303 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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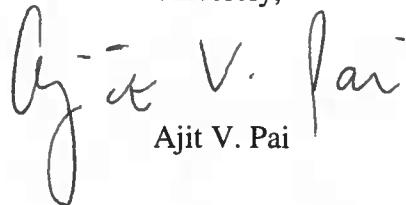
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