

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *All-Digital AM Broadcasting*, MB Docket No. 19-311; *Revitalization of the AM Radio Service*, MB Docket No. 13-249.

As you may have heard me say on occasion, I'm a big fan of broadcasters, and in particular those on the AM band. I'm also a big fan of innovation. This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking combines both affinities, empowering AM broadcasters to provide better service and compete in an increasingly digital marketplace. It explores a voluntary transition to all-digital, which would allow AM broadcasters to decide for themselves if making the change is right for them and their listeners.

AM broadcasters are a crucial component of the communities they serve. They provide live coverage of our favorite teams' games. They provide lively talk radio that plays a critical role in our nation's political discourse. They serve minority and foreign-language populations. And in our darkest times, they provide critical life-saving information, as shown by WKJB(AM) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which kept broadcasting even as Hurricane Maria ravaged the island.

If we're going to preserve this critical service, we need to bring AM radio into the 21st century. And all-digital transmission could do that. Indeed, on July 16, 2018, WWFD(AM) in Frederick, Maryland, just outside our nation's capital, became the first AM station to go all-digital on an experimental basis. Its experience informs this NPRM and could portend an exciting future.

This is just the latest step in our ongoing efforts to help revitalize the AM service. The centerpiece of this initiative was issuing AM stations construction permits for 1,730 FM translators, with 615 already licensed. These efforts are already having a real effect on the industry. Countless AM broadcasters have told me that their translators have given their stations a new lease on life. I'm eager to see how today's proposal will eventually lead to the next generation of AM broadcasting.

I'd like to extend a special thanks to Bryan Broadcasting Corporation for filing the Petition for Rulemaking that led to today's NPRM. And I want to thank the Commission staff that prepared this item: from the Media Bureau, Michelle Carey, Christine Goepp, Thomas Horan, and Jerry Manarchuck, and from the Office of General Counsel, Susan Aaron, David Konczal, and Royce Sherlock. For many of you, this was no doubt a crash course in the finer points of AM engineering, but your efforts—and no doubt, many cups of coffee—will help bring AM radio into the 21st century.