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For Immediate Release

**FCC AFFIRMS FIRST AMENDMENT BY DENYING PETITION
SEEKING TO SUPPRESS COVERAGE OF WHITE HOUSE
CORONAVIRUS TASK FORCE NEWS CONFERENCES**

Rejects Government Investigation into Broadcasters in Favor of a Free Press

WASHINGTON, April 6, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission’s Office of General Counsel and Media Bureau today wholly rejected a petition by Free Press demanding a government investigation into broadcasters that have aired statements by the President of the United States during White House Coronavirus Task Force briefings and related commentary regarding the coronavirus pandemic by other on-air personalities. The letter order, co-signed by General Counsel Thomas M. Johnson, Jr. and Media Bureau Chief Michelle Carey, notes that Free Press’ petition seeks remedies that would dangerously curtail the freedom of the press embodied in the First Amendment and misconstrues the Commission’s rules. The decision also makes clear that the FCC will neither act as a roving arbiter of broadcasters’ editorial judgments nor discourage them from airing breaking news events involving government officials in the midst of the current global pandemic.

Following the denial of Free Press’ petition, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Pai issued the following statement:

“Under my leadership, the FCC has always stood firmly in defense of Americans’ First Amendment freedoms, including freedom of the press. And so long as I am Chairman of this agency, we always will. The federal government will not—and never should—investigate broadcasters for their editorial judgments simply because a special interest group is angry at the views being expressed on the air as well as those expressing them. In short, we will not censor the news. Instead, consistent with the First Amendment, we leave it to broadcasters to determine for themselves how to cover this national emergency, including live events involving our nation’s leaders.”

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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).