



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0523

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February 25, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write to respectfully invite the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to hold a field hearing in Kern County, California, to explore challenges related to ensuring wireless network resiliency during wildfires.

As you know, California has recently suffered some of the most devastating fire seasons in the State's history. In 2016, the Erskine Fire in my Congressional District destroyed 309 homes and buildings, killed two individuals, and scorched over 48,000 acres. In 2017 and 2018, California experienced some of the largest, deadliest, and most destructive wildfires ever recorded, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Further, cited as preventive measures to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires, California utility companies have initiated massive preemptive power shutoffs in 2019, impacting millions of California residents throughout the Golden State. According to an October 2019 FCC document, these preventative power shutoffs impacted wireless sites in 32 of California's 58 counties.¹

With wildfires in California continuing to be more destructive and deadly than in the past, along with Americans becoming increasingly reliant on wireless cellular devices, the importance of ensuring a robust and resilient wireless network is critical to ensuring communications remain operational during times of emergency. While the FCC has taken important steps to update the Wireless Network Resiliency Cooperative Framework in light of the nation's experience with hurricanes, there remains a critical need to update the framework given California's experience with devastating wildfires. I believe that holding a field hearing in Kern County would provide the FCC an opportunity to learn firsthand from the relevant stakeholders to help inform wildfire-related recommendations in the Framework. I applaud your efforts to review and update the Framework and believe this will be an important step toward ensuring wireless network resiliency in California.

¹ <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-360482A1.pdf>

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "K" and "M".

KEVIN McCARTHY
House Republican Leader