



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 5, 2020

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman
Committee on Science, Space and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Federal Communications Commission's recent action on orbital debris mitigation. I agree that we share the same goals of ensuring U.S. economic competitiveness and leadership in space, which is precisely why it was appropriate for the Commission to adopt the Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at our April Open Meeting.

As you know, the nation's commercial space sector is growing rapidly. With smaller and less expensive satellites and reusable launch vehicles, large numbers of satellites in low- or medium-Earth orbit are being launched. I am optimistic that many of these satellites will make high-speed Internet access a reality for many Americans across the country, particularly in rural areas. We've already approved 14 applications and market access requests by 11 companies who seek to launch these types of systems, and at least two companies have already started deploying their constellations of satellites.

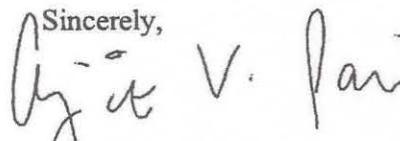
With those rights to launch come responsibilities in orbit, of course—which is why the Commission under my leadership decided to take a fresh look at our orbital debris rules. It has been 15 years since the Commission first adopted those rules, with the aim of addressing the threat posed by orbital debris. As you know, this is a lifetime in the fast-moving commercial space sector, which means it is critical for the future of the sector that we maintain a safe space environment. Therefore, I believe that our decision to move forward with modernizing our orbital debris mitigation rules at our April meeting was the right one.

Our decision struck a balanced approach. For instance, it included incorporation of major portions of the U.S. Government Orbital Debris Mitigation Standard Practices (ODMSP) that were recently revised as a result of an interagency effort led by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. And as a result of feedback raised after we released the draft to the public well before the vote (an FCC process reform I initiated three years ago specifically to enable such feedback), we moved certain issues into the Further Notice to seek additional input from stakeholders. For example, the Further Notice now seeks comment on spacecraft maneuverability, mitigation measures related to the probability of accidental explosions, and collision risk and casualty risk for satellite constellations on a system-wide basis. We also seek comment on an indemnification requirement similar to one used by other countries. Finally, we

modified the Further Notice to seek additional information on the proposal to use a surety bond tied to post-mission disposal. These are all important issues that will benefit from further opportunity for comment. The Further Notice will also provide an opportunity to include additional provisions in our rules that reflect the ODMSP.

There is no question that the Commission possesses the authority to take these actions, in coordination with other Federal agencies. Were it otherwise, we wouldn't have had these rules on the books for a decade and a half, across Republican and Democratic Administrations alike. And in this particular case, we worked closely with our Federal partners in developing these new rules and proposals. We will continue to do so as we consider these issues.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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May 5, 2020

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Lucas:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Federal Communications Commission's recent action on orbital debris mitigation. I agree that we share the same goals of ensuring U.S. economic competitiveness and leadership in space, which is precisely why it was appropriate for the Commission to adopt the Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at our April Open Meeting.

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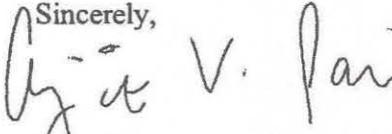
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May 5, 2020

The Honorable Kendra Horn
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Space
Committee on Science, Space and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Horn:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Federal Communications Commission's recent action on orbital debris mitigation. I agree that we share the same goals of ensuring U.S. economic competitiveness and leadership in space, which is precisely why it was appropriate for the Commission to adopt the Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at our April Open Meeting.

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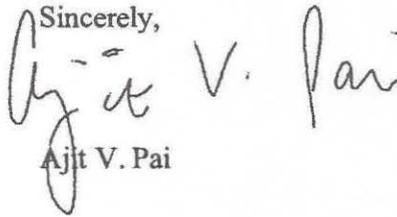
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May 5, 2020

The Honorable Brian Babin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Space
Committee on Science, Space and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Babin:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Federal Communications Commission's recent action on orbital debris mitigation. I agree that we share the same goals of ensuring U.S. economic competitiveness and leadership in space, which is precisely why it was appropriate for the Commission to adopt the Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at our April Open Meeting.

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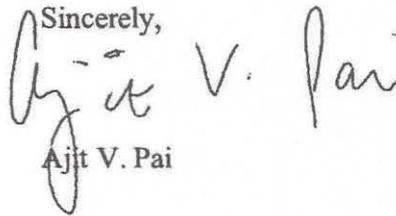
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