

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Amendment of Section 73.3556 of the Commission's Rules Regarding Duplication of Programming on Commonly Owned Radio Stations*, MB Docket No. 19-310; *Modernization of Media Regulation Initiative*, MB Docket No. 17-105.

100 years ago, AM radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh made history with our nation's first commercial radio broadcast. That kicked off decades of distinguished service by AM broadcasters in big cities and small towns alike. But today, the AM radio service faces serious technical and economic challenges—challenges made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to help AM broadcasters overcome these challenges, the Commission has been looking for ways to help by alleviating unnecessary regulatory burdens, providing more flexibility, and improving sound quality. Eliminating the radio duplication rule for AM stations, as we do today, could help further all three objectives.

Giving economically distressed stations greater flexibility to simulcast programming could help them stay afloat and continue serving their communities. As the Commission observed back in 1986, during what seem to be, in retrospect, AM's salad days, “where separate programming is not economically feasible, duplication of AM service is preferable to a struggling station reducing programming or going off the air entirely.” Moreover, simulcasting could assist AM stations which might want to voluntarily transition to all-digital transmission. One station could offer the higher audio quality of digital transmission, while another could keep supplying analog programming to listeners who don't yet have digital-capable equipment.

In short, I'm optimistic that the step that we take today will help the AM band survive in an increasingly competitive marketplace and continue the grand tradition of stations like KDKA. My thanks to the Commission staff who got us here: from the Media Bureau, Michelle Carey, Brendan Holland, Jamile Kadre, Radhika Karmarkar, and Sarah Whitesell; from the Office of Economics and Analytics, Andy Wise; from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities, Belford Lawson; and from the Office of General Counsel, David Konczal, Bill Richardson, and Royce Sherlock.