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For Immediate Release

CHAIRMAN PAI PROPOSES RULES TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENT SPONSORED BROADCAST CONTENT

WASHINGTON, September 15, 2020—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today shared with his colleagues a proposal to establish strong, clear disclosure requirements for broadcast television and radio content sponsored or provided by foreign governments.

“American TV viewers and radio listeners have the right to know if a foreign government is behind the programming they are consuming,” said Chairman Pai. “With some station content coming from the likes of China and Russia, it is time to update our rules and shed more sunlight on these practices. I hope my colleagues will act quickly to approve this proposal so we can help the American public be informed when they may be watching or listening to foreign-government propaganda.”

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) seeks to amend section 73.1212 of the Commission’s rules to require a specific disclosure at the time of broadcast if a foreign governmental entity has paid a radio or television station, directly or indirectly, to air material, or if the programming was provided to the station free of charge by such an entity as an inducement to broadcast the material. The proposed rules would provide standardized disclosure language for stations to use in such instances to specifically identify the foreign government involved.

The Commission’s current rules require many disclosures related to broadcast sponsorship but do not specify when and how foreign government sponsorship should be disclosed to the public. These existing rules, which date back to the Radio Act of 1927, predate the Commission itself and were intended to prohibit stations from disguising advertising as program content. If ultimately enacted, Chairman Pai’s proposed rules would further the critical goal of transparency and apply it to foreign governments and political parties as well as their agents.

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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).