STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI

Re: *Further Streamlining Part 25 Rules Governing Satellite Services*, IB Docket No. 18-314.

This past Sunday, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket blasted into the evening sky, carrying the Crew Dragon spacecraft into the heavens and a four-member crew to the International Space Station. It was the first operational mission of the spacecraft—and it marked a major milestone in public-private partnerships to help advance American leadership in space.

We are in the midst of a New Space Age. And while today's celestial exploration captures our attention, the communications-related innovation happening in space is fascinating too. This FCC has made it a point to encourage American leadership in this New Space Age when it comes to communications. We acted early to authorize spectrum bands for use in large non-geostationary satellite orbit constellations. These NGSOs, like SpaceX, OneWeb, Kuiper, and others, are poised to provide high-speed Internet access virtually anywhere in the United States, helping to close the digital divide and increase competition.

We also created a new regulatory framework for small satellites in order to encourage space-based startups to innovate here at home. As I said then, "There is no reason why a satellite the size of a shoebox, with the life expectancy of a guinea pig, should be regulated the same way as a satellite the size of a school bus that will stay in orbit for centuries." Our reforms got results. Take these words from the head of Lynk Global, a small-sat startup, who wrote afterward: "While some government leaders create barriers that slow down innovation, other nations adopt leap-frog strategies to help their domestic industries capture world leadership. The leadership of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently made a decision that will ensure America stays on the leading edge of the next technological revolution."[1]

We have also made major reforms to advance connectivity by means of "earth stations in motion." These reforms facilitate deployment of satellite-based communications services to ships, airplanes, and vehicles. This may allow these services to be delivered to those who are often on the go, like students on long school bus trips, shippers on waterways, passengers and crew on airplanes, and motorists and truckers on the nation's highways and byways.

And while we seek to facilitate the deployment of satellite technologies, we also recognize the need to protect against the potential hazards posed by the increasingly populated low-Earth orbit environment. That's why earlier this year, the Commission adopted robust rules to mitigate orbital debris and sought comment on additional ways to ensure that we are being responsible stewards of the extraterrestrial environment.

This FCC's priority on promoting space-based innovation continues to this very day. Today, we continue our efforts to streamline our part 25 rules by harmonizing the licensing process for many classes of satellite space stations and earth stations. These changes will end the need to make unnecessary or duplicative filings with the Commission and will reduce burdens placed on applicants, which will expedite our processing of applications and eliminate regulatory red tape standing in the way of the deployment of satellite-based services.

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[1] Charles Miller, "Streamlined FCC licensing a big deal for smallsats," *SpaceNews* (Mar. 2, 2020), https://spacenews.com/op-ed-streamlined-fcc-licensing-a-big-deal-for-smallsats/.

We adopt a voluntary, unified licensing process for most space stations and blanket-licensed earth stations in satellite systems operating above 10 GHz. Instead of having separate licenses for space stations and earth stations, these satellite systems will have the choice of operating pursuant to a single license from the Commission covering both types of stations.

We also align the build-out requirements for earth stations with the build-out periods for their associated space stations and reduce some of the filing and paperwork burden for satellite operators by eliminating requirements to report information that the Commission doesn't regularly use. Finally, we get rid of the requirement that earth station licensees notify the Commission of minor changes that are unlikely to lead to increased interference with other operators' systems.

We don't explore space ourselves. We don't build rockets. And we don't build and launch satellites. But make no mistake: The FCC has a key role in space. As my friend and former Chairman Newt Minow aptly put it: "communications satellites will be much more important than sending a man into space, because they will send ideas into space. Ideas last longer than men." This FCC has met that challenge, and because we have, the United States will continue to lead in the New Space Age.

For their work on this Order—yet another step in promoting U.S. leadership—I'd like to thank, from the International Bureau: Jose Albuquerque, Paul Blais, Clay DeCell, Jennifer Gilsenan, Karl Kensinger, Ron Marcelo, Tom Sullivan, Troy Tanner, Merissa Velez, and Cheryl Williams; from the Enforcement Bureau: Eric Ehrenreich, JoAnn Lucanik, Jason Koslofsky, and Paul Noone; from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities: Maura McGowan; from the Office of Economics and Analytics: Virginia Metallo and Emily Talaga; from the Office of Engineering and Technology: Michael Ha, Ira Keltz, Nick Oros, and Jamison Prime; from the Office of the General Counsel: David Konczal and Bill Richardson; and from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau: Steve Buenzow, Tim Hilfiger, John Schauble, Blaise Scinto, and Joel Taubenblatt.