

**REMARKS OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
AGENDA MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2021**

Good morning. This is the first meeting of the Federal Communications Commission in 2021 and the first meeting with Commissioner Nathan Simington—welcome! It is also the last meeting with my colleague, Chairman Ajit Pai. To commemorate it, we have a series of presentations from the agency staff about the work that they have done during his tenure. For these presentations, and the ongoing work of the staff, a big thank you. As the pandemic raged, you worked from home. In the process, you demonstrated that your command of communications policy and your commitment to public service is second to none. That’s not to say it has always been easy. I know. Because I, too, am often working from home and playing a lot of different roles. One moment I’m running an office call, another I’m speaking via video at an online conference, and in yet another I’m Wi-Fi fixer and snack-maker. This meeting is really a way to express our gratitude. So again, thank you.

This meeting also takes place a week after the insurrection at the Capitol. The images of that day linger. They are hard to shake.

I worked for many years in the Capitol. I know its towering heights, secluded corners, and labyrinth hallways. But it’s not the loftiness of those spaces that I find most compelling. It’s what’s down below on the floors. I’ve traversed them too many times to count, heading back and forth, clicking on the tiles in less-than-sensible work shoes. I think the most beautiful floor tiles in the Capitol are the mid-19th century encaustic mosaics. The clay is inlaid, so the colors in the tiles are especially vibrant and diverse. It’s like the metaphor for our union is right there on the ground. Even where these mosaic floors are uneven and worn, what strikes you most is the durability. They have survived so much in our history.

History, of course, is always being written. The violence done to the Capitol last week is an especially ugly chapter. To see those sacred spaces desecrated stings. To see those gorgeous floors smeared with feces and hate hurts. To see the Confederate flag paraded across those tiles sears and burns. And to watch those disowning the hatred that brought us here when for too long they walked too casually alongside it is difficult.

It was Martin Luther King Jr. who said: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.” Now we have an opportunity to lean into the light.

As a nation we need connections—physical and digital—that strengthen our mutual bonds. We need connections that remind us that our states are united and our interdependence is powerful. And as if on cue, a new appropriations law has provided this agency with authority to help do just that. Congress directed us to establish an Emergency Broadband Benefit to expand access to high-speed connections and assist those struggling in the ongoing economic crisis. It tasked the agency with expanded support for telehealth and provided funding that will make our networks more powerful and more secure. We also cannot forget the millions of students caught

in the homework gap because they lack high-speed service at home and are locked out of the virtual classroom. In short, we have real work to do. Work that helps ensure that safe, reliable, and affordable communications reach 100% of this country—rural areas, urban areas, and everything in between.

This is what lies ahead. But we started today with presentations that look back. So let me end by thanking the Chairman for his years of public service. Let me also praise him for the work he has done to help keep those who work here safe during this pandemic. He went above and beyond to keep the staff of this agency informed and engaged in a time of real crisis. For this he deserves great credit and appreciation.

I know he knows this, but it bears repeating: Serving the American people is a tremendous honor. I wish him the best in the future.