

Media Contact:

Anne Veigle, (202) 418-0506
anne.veigle@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

**FCC REVIEWS ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF WIRELINE
COMPETITION BUREAU AND RURAL BROADBAND AUCTIONS
TASK FORCE**

WASHINGTON, January 13, 2021—The Federal Communications Commission today heard reports from leaders of the Wireline Competition Bureau and Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force on their work over the last four years. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai dedicated the final meeting of his chairmanship to thanking Commission staff for their exceptional work and joining his colleagues in hearing presentations from Bureau, Office, and Task Force leaders.

Wireline Competition Bureau

“Over the last four years, our entire team has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the mission of the Wireline Competition Bureau: ensuring that all Americans have access to robust, affordable broadband and voice services; protecting consumers; and fostering competition. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, without missing a beat, we doubled-down to promptly build and launch a \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program and provide regulatory relief needed to help a wide variety of stakeholders respond to the pandemic. The Wireline Competition Bureau has been described as the “workhorse” of the Commission – the staff has more than earned that moniker in our tireless work to achieve Chairman Pai’s top priorities during his term in office.”

– Kris Anne Monteith, Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau

The Bureau’s presentation to the Commissioners summarized the Bureau’s substantial progress in core areas, including expanding broadband to millions of previously unserved homes and businesses in rural America, removing regulatory barriers to infrastructure investment, and transitioning to next-generation networks. The Bureau also worked to promote investment and innovation through its crucial work on the Restoring Internet Freedom Order and to protect consumers through initiatives to combat robocalls and make the nation’s communications network supply chain more secure. In addition, the Bureau’s work in establishing 988 as the new, nationwide, 3-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health counselors has received national recognition for facilitating a critical communications tool that will save lives. And when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Bureau acted quickly to help Americans deal with the crisis, implementing a \$200 million telehealth program and working to keep Americans connected during these challenging times.

Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force

“Broadband is a fundamental and necessary technology of modern life, and now more than ever, people need affordable broadband no matter where they live. During the past four years, the Task Force used reverse auctions to award almost \$11 billion to bring broadband to over 10 million people across the country. These innovative programs will bring faster Internet to

more unserved areas at a lower cost than ever before. The Task Force was the intra-agency engine that kept these programs on track, moving forward collaboratively and efficiently.”

– Michael Janson, Director, Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force

The Task Force’s presentation to the Commissioners reviewed its work with over 100 staff from across the agency on reverse auctions that award Universal Service Fund support to high-cost areas. These programs implemented the Commission’s top priority of bridging the digital divide and advanced the universal service principle that everyone should have access to advanced telecommunications at reasonable cost. In 2018, the Task Force oversaw the Connect America Fund Phase II auction, which was the first multi-round reverse auction of ongoing high-cost support, and awarded \$1.5 billion to bring broadband to over 700,000 unserved homes and businesses. In 2020, building on the success of the CAF-II auction, the Task Force oversaw the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction, which awarded \$9.2 billion to bring broadband to 5.2 million unserved homes and businesses across the country. The Task Force also managed the development of the Mobility Fund Phase II challenge process regarding the accuracy of mobile coverage maps, and the establishment of the 5G Fund for Rural America, which will award up to \$9 billion to bring mobile 5G to unserved areas.

The presentations, video of this meeting, and Chairman and Commissioner statements will be available and archived at: <https://www.fcc.gov/news-events/events/2021/01/january-2021-open-commission-meeting>.

###

Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

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).