



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 8, 2021

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

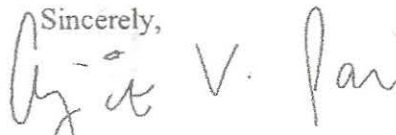
Dear Senator Baldwin:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to remove barriers to broadband deployment—specifically as it relates to pole attachment rules and processes. Closing the digital divide has been my top priority since becoming Chairman. Ensuring that broadband providers can build out infrastructure quickly and cost effectively is essential. That's why I worked to adopt a "one-touch make-ready" pole attachment regime in 2018, which will promote broadband deployment and competition by speeding up the process and reducing the costs of attaching new network facilities to utility poles.

Easing access to utility poles, combined with making it easier for companies to transition from copper lines to fiber networks and abolishing rules that heavily regulate the Internet, has facilitated broadband deployment. Millions more Americans have access to the Internet today than in 2016. In both 2018 and 2019, the United States set records for annual fiber deployment. Average download speeds for fixed broadband have doubled since the end of 2017. The number of Americans enjoying more than two options for standard fixed terrestrial broadband service has increased by 52%. And a new study from USTelecom shows that, compared to 2015, average consumers are paying 28% less for broadband in real terms while enjoying faster speeds.

As you note, NCTA—The Internet & Television Association filed a Petition for Declaratory Ruling that asks the Commission to declare that pole owners must share in the costs of pole replacements in unserved areas and give pole attachment disputes in unserved areas priority treatment, among other things. The Wireline Competition Bureau sought comment on the petition and the comment period ended on September 17. Bureau staff is currently reviewing the record. Please be assured that we will take into consideration the issues and concerns presented by all stakeholders as the Commission deliberates on the appropriate course of action.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai