**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR**

**SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA**

**“A BUILD AGENDA FOR AMERICA”**

**JULY 2, 2025**

 It is great to be back in Sioux Falls, and I am especially grateful to be here once again at VIKOR in their tower climber Training Center. I am always excited to get out here to South Dakota and visit with so many people that have become good friends over the past few years. And it is wonderful to see how much this facility continues to grow and expand with new practice towers, rigging and hoisting set ups, and training structures to climb.

 I first visited this Training Center seven years ago when you held a ribbon cutting ceremony. That was also the first time in this job that I ever put on a harness and hardhat, blatantly violated the Dukakis rule that governs public officials and helmets, and climbed the practice tower in the parking lot out back with Brandon—your Director of Safety and Field Operations. I was admittedly a little shaky on that first climb. And it certainly didn’t help when the other climber we were with, Leland, started trying to shake the platform up top.

 But from that day forward, I’ve considered Brandon a good friend and Leland, well, just a so-so friend. Since then, I’ve had the good fortune of joining many other acclaimed tower dogs on top of dozens of different towers all across the country—from a utility pole in Utqiagvik, Alaska right on the Arctic Ocean to Florida’s Gulf Coast. Those climbs and times with America’s tower crews have been a lot fun, and I have learned a lot about the work it takes to build infrastructure.

 My most memorable climb was probably one I did in 2023 with Brandon just about 10 miles from here in Rowena, South Dakota. If you’ve ever been through Rowena, then chances are you know which tower I’m talking about. If you don’t, it’s the 2,000 foot tall one surrounded by about a thousand acres of farmland. Late that afternoon, I met Brandon at the base of that tower where we caught up for a while before strapping into our harnesses and heading up one of the tallest structures in the world. We made it up top just in time for an epic sunset and for Brandon to finish up some troubleshooting.

 Over the last seven years, I have had the opportunity to return to South Dakota many times. Now, I will concede that Sioux Falls might not be everyone’s pick for rolling out a policy agenda for a federal agency headquartered in Washington, D.C. I imagine that the “other SF”—San Francisco—might seem like a more natural pick to most when outlining a tech or telecom agenda. But I can’t think of a more appropriate place for me to announce the agenda that will guide much of the FCC’s upcoming work than right here in the real SF.

That is because South Dakota shows what is possible when we get our regulatory policies right. I’ve seen it firsthand about 20 miles north of here in Baltic where I hopped on a connected tractor with Jeff, a third-generation farmer, while he used a high-speed connection to make precise, inch-by-inch adjustments to the treatments he was applying to his row crops. I’ve seen it a little over 20 miles south of here in Lennox where a skilled nursing facility used a broadband connection to connect patients in rural areas with specialists in larger towns. I’ve seen it about an hour further south in Yankton where sparks were flying at a manufacturing plant as the workers there built the steel telecom towers and infrastructure for 5G services. And I’ve seen the power of connectivity all the way on the other side of the state, about a mile underground, in Lead, South Dakota, deep inside an old, 1800s gold mine. Thanks to a new fiber connection that runs all the way down that rickety, wooden elevator shaft we traveled down, those more than 100 year old mining tunnels are now home to the Sanford Research Lab, which is conducting Nobel-Prize winning scientific work down there.

 South Dakota is also a great place for this speech because the rural communities spread across the state—from the Black Hills in the west to the rolling plains here in the east—are precisely the types of communities that we need to keep in mind as we develop policies to ensure every American has a fair shot at a high-speed connection. I’ve learned a lot from South Dakota, and I want to thank leaders like Senator John Thune, Congressman Dusty Johnson, and former Governor Kristi Noem for the hospitality they have shown me here over the years.

 Of course, I am also in South Dakota because of the tower workers here today. America’s telecom crews are the best of the best. They are salt-of-the-earth people that always get the toughest jobs done. And I want to run a policy agenda back in Washington that makes their jobs just a little bit easier.

 And speaking of D.C., I think it is safe to say that things are changing back there and fast—all thanks to President Trump. There is a real sense in Washington that President Trump’s Administration is not looking to play it safe or make moves around the edges only. President Trump is taking quick action to usher in a new Golden Age for America.

 I would say that this is precisely the type of change we need in the telecom sector. Just look back at the last four years. The Biden Administration’s stated goal of connecting millions of Americans to high-speed Internet service foundered on reams of red tape and progressive policies that needlessly delayed the promise of new infrastructure builds. Or take spectrum. Historically, America has been a leader in making new spectrum bands available. But while the Biden Administration fell into the slow lane, our global competitors and adversaries passed us by, and the FCC’s authority to auction spectrum lapsed for the first time ever.

 With all of that in our rear-view mirror, now is the time to change things up. It is time to unleash new growth and opportunity. It is time to build. And that is what I am here today—to outline my vision for doing just that through the FCC’s Build America Agenda.

As I will outline today, our Build America Agenda will focus on delivering on a number of core objectives. We will unleash high-speed infrastructure builds. We will restore America’s leadership in wireless. We will boost the U.S. space economy. We will advance our national security. And we will strengthen America’s tower and telecom workforce. We will deliver on all of this by implementing smart policies while carrying out a massive and comprehensive deregulatory agenda.

As we do so, we will be guided at the agency by a few simple ideas. For one, we will keep the Gretzky test front and center. We want to keep our eye on where the proverbial puck is going, not where it has been. For another, we are going to take a first principles approach. Just because a regulation has been on the books for thirty years, we are not going to keep it there simply out of a sense of inertia. For still another, we will focus on competition as it exists today. The old regulatory silos have been breaking down for quite some time, so the agency must move forward with a keen understanding of today’s converged markets. We are going to focus on outcomes, rather than process to nowhere. We are going to have a bias towards action. After all, delay has an unappreciated economic and social cost. We are going to push for simple, clear rules, rather than complex and bespoke frameworks. And we are going to support U.S. businesses and domestic onshoring.

Build America is not an agenda that simply draws from my years of working at an agency inside the D.C. Beltway. It is an agenda inspired by the men and women that make up America’s telecom workforce, people like Brandon, who have shown me firsthand what it takes to build modern networks. It is an agenda that ensures America doesn’t just keep up with the rest of the world, but leads it.

So let’s get into it.

**Unleashing High-Speed Infrastructure Builds**

To start, the FCC must do its part to unleash high-speed infrastructure builds in communities all across the country. We made a lot of good progress on this front during President Trump’s first term, but there is more work to be done. That means modernizing the regulations that have been driving up costs and holding back Internet builds. The good news is that we know this playbook well.

When I helped lead the FCC’s efforts to streamline infrastructure rules back in 2018, we saw record breaking capital investment and network buildout. Dollars were flowing towards places with common-sense permitting rules, like here in Sioux Falls, thanks to my friend Mayor Paul TenHaken. The Mayor’s light-touch regulatory framework meant that Sioux Falls, South Dakota—which is not some big metro market—was one of the first communities in America to get 5G.

 That is why permitting reform must be a top priority for the FCC. Our Build America Agenda will pick up where we left off during President Trump’s first term in a number of important ways. In fact, here is some news. I am announcing today that the FCC will be voting later this month to start a rulemaking that will accelerate the transition from aging copper line networks to the modern, high-speed ones that Americans want and deserve. Our goal can be stated simply: we are aiming to free up billions of dollars for new networks, instead of forcing providers to keep investing in old ones.

 But that is not all. I will also be asking my FCC colleagues to vote this month on an item that will revise and update the agency’s pole attachment rules. For the uninitiated, the FCC’s pole attachment regulations set out the basic rules of the road that both broadband builders and utility pole owners must follow when telecom crews are trying to string new fiber lines across those poles. For too long, though, this process has been slow, cumbersome, and plagued with delays when it comes to the large-scale deployments needed to end the digital divide. So we are taking action to encourage greater collaboration and provide more concrete timelines for these large batch requests. This item will also seek comment on whether the FCC can help accelerate mobile wireless builds by finding that light poles are covered by Section 224 of the Communications Act. All of these actions should get America building again.

Of course, the FCC’s permitting reforms will not stop there. Our Build America Agenda includes efforts to further streamline the many regulations that stand in the way of new infrastructure projects. While Sioux Falls has led the way in modernizing its approach to siting requests, it still takes too long and costs too much to build infrastructure in so many parts of the country. So on my watch, the FCC will be taking a fresh look at how the agency might use our authorities under the Communications Act, including Section 253 and Section 332, to streamline regulatory approaches. We will also be updating the FCC’s approach to environmental regulations like NEPA with an eye towards recent Supreme Court actions. You will hear more from the FCC on this front soon. So stay tuned.

**Restoring America’s Leadership in Wireless**

 The FCC’s Build America Agenda is about more than turning dirt and building high-speed lines. We also need to free up more spectrum. Doing so is key to restoring America’s leadership in wireless.

This is an important step because freeing up spectrum creates jobs, increases competition, and drives down prices for consumers. It is also part and parcel of our geopolitical leadership and national security. When the U.S. frees up spectrum, the world takes notice. It puts wind at the backs of America’s innovators and entrepreneurs, rather than those who are working against our interests. It allows America’s innovators to lead on the global stage. It also helps keep these tower climbers busy. More spectrum means more building.

That is why the FCC has prioritized taking actions on spectrum in the first few months of this Administration. Kicking things off, we launched a proceeding to look at a large portion of mid-band spectrum in the Upper C-Band. You may recall that, back in 2020, the FCC auctioned 280 MHz of the lower portion of this band for commercial 5G. Like almost all spectrum efforts these days, that one was no easy task. But the FCC’s talented staff rose to the challenge and found a path forward so that America’s telecom workers could build. Fast forward to today and the C-Band now powers new and competitive offerings from in-home broadband to high-speed mobile offerings from coast to coast.

In fact, the FCC’s work on spectrum, including the C-Band, is one reason that consumers have been benefiting from falling prices. Indeed, just last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that the price of home Internet service fell by 3.1% in May from a year earlier. We want to keep that trend going.

That is why we’re continuing to move quickly on spectrum. For instance, in April, we launched a proceeding to explore a new licensing framework that could free up 600 MHz of spectrum in the 37 GHz band for new and intensive commercial services.

And I am pleased to announce another new action here today. Later this month, I will ask my Commission colleagues to vote on an order that will move us another step closer to auctioning the spectrum licenses in what we refer to as the AWS-3 band. These are spectrum licenses that have been laying fallow for years. Getting it into consumers’ hands is the right decision. It’s also a good outcome from a national security standpoint, too, because proceeds from this auction are being used to complete the “rip and replace” program to get Huawei and ZTE gear out of our networks.

We will keep making more progress on spectrum, too, thanks to President Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill. Chairman Cruz in the Senate and Chairman Guthrie in the House have done great work on their portions of the bill by establishing a robust spectrum pipeline and restoring the FCC’s auction authority. Restoring our auction authority has proved elusive over the last two years, so I am pleased that Congress appears poised to finally get this done and look forward to implementing the law as passed by Congress. Buckle up, and get ready to build.

**Boosting America’s Space Economy**

Continuing to move vertically, from infrastructure on the ground to airwaves in the sky, next up is space. The Build America Agenda doesn’t just look here on Earth, but in orbit as well. The final frontier is home to an emerging constellation of satellites that have become an essential tool in America’s national economic and geopolitical strategy. From high-speed consumer broadband offerings to groundbreaking scientific research to mission-critical services that protect our homeland, our space industry is delivering real results for the country. America must continue to lead the world when it comes to space. That means we need U.S. companies to dominate in orbit.

Our efforts on this front at the FCC will be driven by a few guiding principles: speed, simplicity, security, and satellite spectrum abundance. And I am pleased to report that the FCC is already making progress in all of these areas. On speed, we’re clearing out satellite application backlogs and reducing processing times at a record pace. On simplicity, we’re working to eliminate unnecessary rules that throttle the satellite industry, such as obsolete power limits and cumbersome siting restrictions. On security, we launched a proceeding that looks at bolstering and safeguarding the services provided by our GPS system. On satellite spectrum abundance, we’ve opened a rulemaking that could free up more than 20,000 megahertz for satellite broadband.

We cannot allow outdated Commission rules to stifle investment and innovation. That is especially the case for satellite services, which are subject to slow, resource intensive, and bespoke review mechanisms. As I have observed before, it can take less time to build and launch satellite systems than it does to shuffle paperwork through the government’s review process. That ends here. The Build America Agenda will inject rocket fuel into our licensing process by standardizing our reviews through more objective metrics—protecting America’s orbital advantage for decades to come.

**Cutting Red Tape and Modernizing FCC Operations**

Outdated and unnecessary regulations from Washington can derail efforts to bring communities across the digital divide. That is why our Build America Agenda includes a comprehensive initiative to eliminate rules and regulations that are unlawful, outdated, or simply no longer necessary. We are doing so through our “In Re: Delete, Delete, Delete” proceeding, which seeks comment on every rule, regulation, or guidance document that the FCC should eliminate to alleviate unnecessary regulatory burdens. This is the largest deregulatory effort in FCC history. Don’t worry, we’ll keep the receipts to prove it.

We took one of our first actions under this initiative last week by eliminating obsolete cable regulations that are no longer relevant or even applicable in today’s modern marketplace. The FCC had been keeping these 33-year-old rules on the books despite the fact that they had been long overtaken by events. Our action last week resulted in the removal of about 77 rules or requirements, 8 forms, 27 pages, and 11,475 words from the book. Clearing away obsolete and unworkable rules frees up providers to focus on delivering quality service and creating jobs. So we will be doing a lot more of this moving forward.

 And here’s another piece of news on this front. I am announcing this week that we are increasing the velocity of our Delete proceeding with a vote at our July Commission meeting. That is when the Commission will unveil a streamlined process for removing regulations at scale without having to go through years of unnecessary legal procedures. For this first tranche of regulations that we will vote on later this month, we will move directly to delete 40 rules or requirements, spanning more than 17 pages and 7,600 words. It’s hard to believe we still have regulations for telegraph, rabbit-ear broadcast receivers, and phone booths on our books. Starting this month, that will change.

 With all of this, we are also focused on ensuring the FCC delivers great results efficiently. And that means modernizing our own internal processes and operations. One big step we are taking on this front is to bring our licensing and other databases forward (albeit belatedly) into the 21st Century. If you regularly submit filings or ping agency databases, you know there’s a lot of room to make progress on this front. We are working on it, and I expect that you will find a better experience ahead.

**Advancing America’s National Security and Public Safety**

As we build, the FCC will ensure that our networks are secure and resilient too. Today, the U.S. faces a persistent threat from foreign adversaries like the CCP exploring for ways to breach our networks as they seek to undermine America’s global technology leadership. It is more important than ever that the FCC remain vigilant to keep America’s networks secure. That is why one of the first actions I took as FCC Chairman was to establish a new Council on National Security within the agency.

 We have already taken action since January to advance America’s national security, including a sweeping inquiry into the ongoing U.S. operations of businesses that pose unacceptable risks, adopting rules that prohibit Bad Labs (including those tied to the government of China) from participating in our equipment authorization program, and starting a rulemaking to require entities with concerning links to foreign adversaries to disclose those connections. The FCC has a strong, bipartisan track record when it comes to our work to promote national security, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on additional measures to secure our networks.

 Our Build America Agenda will ensure the U.S. extends its lead over China in the race for critical technologies like 5G, 6G, and AI so that American companies continue to be the gold standard around the world. Supporting these industries of the future requires significant growth and investment into America’s infrastructure so that we can keep up with the hockey stick curve we are seeing in terms of data flowing across our networks.

**Strengthening America’s Telecom Workforce**

 Finally, we cannot advance a Build America Agenda without a strong U.S. workforce. And that brings me right back here to the tower and telecom workers that get the job done day in and day out. Our Build America Agenda creates new opportunities to expand and strengthen our country’s blue-collar workers. After all, America’s tower and telecom crews certainly work hard enough. You certainly put in enough hours—often on the road and away from your families. I imagine there are a lot of folks out there that take our country’s communications infrastructure for granted. They just assume it will work. If they think about it at all, perhaps they think it works on magic or pixie dust. But it is all thanks to you. None of it works without your dedication and skill.

 So I think it is appropriate for you to realize the value of your work. And I am pleased to see that we are already making progress on this front. Providers are now committing to a range of workforce reforms that will result in a more sustainable environment for America’s tower and telecom crews. Carriers are putting new values on your work—ones that better reflect current marketplace realities—and those changes are starting to take effect. Providers are changing their approach to 1099 crews, too, helping to ensure that experienced, well-trained crews get the job at fair prices. And these changes are also making it harder for foreign, fly-by-night crews to sweep in and undercut the safety and security of our networks.

 These types of commitments are going to be a gamechanger for America’s workers. And these reforms are part of a broader focus across the Trump Administration. In fact, blue-collar workers have seen real wage growth of almost two percent in the first five months of President Trump’s second term—the largest increase for any administration in nearly 60 years. By looking out for the American worker, my expectation is that we will continue to see growth ahead. The Build America Agenda will certainly help with that.

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 Now, I think we can all agree that I need to start wrapping this up. But I’d like to close with one last South Dakota story that illustrates why the FCC’s Build America Agenda is so important for our country. It’s the story of Misti and her husband, Brian. I met them in Midland, South Dakota, which is about 250 miles west of here.

For years, Misti worked for an IT company in White River, South Dakota. It’s a small town surrounded by miles of farms and ranches. Back then, growing her high-tech business meant hitting the road. Every week, Misti put another thousand miles on her car. Misti says she spent so many hours behind the wheel that she taught herself Spanish while on the road.

After she married her husband, Brian, they moved back to his family’s 7,000-acre farm near Midland. Misti wanted to stay home and raise their young kids. She also wanted to maintain her high-tech career, which helped support her family. Working from home with a high-speed connection would let her do all of that. But that was the problem. They only had dial-up. Misti gave it a shot. It didn’t work. She would try to connect remotely to a client’s site only to lose the connection and the customer.

That all changed in 2017. That’s when an Internet provider built fiber down that dirt road and to their farm. When we visited at her farm, Misti told me that the change “was night and day” and let her maintain her high-tech business. The high-speed connection provided a big boost to their farming operation, too, by enabling precision ag applications.

Misti and Brian show what hard work and an Internet connection can mean for rural communities. They provide a helpful reminder of what our work back in D.C. can mean to families everywhere. Stories like theirs are why the FCC’s Build America Agenda is so important.

We want every community in this country to have that same opportunity. And I look forward to delivering on that promise. Thank you again for joining me here. Thank you again to America’s tower and telecom crews. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Now let’s build!