

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI**

Re: *Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets, WT Docket No. 07-250; Improvements to Benchmarks and Related Requirements Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets, WT Docket No. 15-285*

In 1939, when filming the movie *Secret Service of the Air*, a young actor suffered permanent hearing loss when another cast member fired a .38 caliber pistol just six inches from his right ear. Over 40 years later, that actor became the first U.S. President to wear a hearing aid while in office. President Ronald Reagan was a powerful advocate for hard-of-hearing individuals. Indeed, in 1988, he signed the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act into law. That statute, its subsequent amendments, and our rules implementing its provisions are all designed to ensure that the tens of millions of Americans with hearing loss have access to innovative devices and technologies.

So I am pleased to support today's action, which seeks to ensure that our hearing aid compatibility rules keep pace with changes in technology while promoting the development of new innovations for consumers. We do that in the *Order* by applying our rules to a broader range of voice services. And we do that in the *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* by seeking comment on ways we can increase the percentage of devices that comply with our rules. On this score, I commend the efforts of the hearing loss community, including Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Hearing Loss Association of America, and the National Association of the Deaf, as well as CTIA, CCA, and TIA for reaching a consensus path forward. And I am glad that the *Notice* seeks comment on implementing that approach.

I am also pleased because the *Notice* does not focus solely on ensuring compliance with a particular technical standard. Instead, it seeks comment on a variety of novel ways that providers could ensure that their phones function for those with hearing loss, whether that's through the use of Bluetooth or another creative solution. In this case, what matters most is the end, not the means.

I am also glad that the *Notice* now seeks comment on whether we should adopt a time limit or shot clock for acting on requests for waivers of our hearing aid compatibility rules. Putting ourselves on the clock is a good way to ensure that we stay on time. If a new, innovative technology simply cannot comply with our rules, it is important to give its creator a definitive timeframe for FCC action and thus certainty about whether it can be brought to market.

In a 1983 letter to the director of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, President Reagan wrote that he was "pleased to learn that my wearing a hearing aid may help remove the stigma which some feel is attached to their use." By modernizing our approach to the legislation he signed, we are doing our part to help remove barriers that might otherwise prevent those with hearing loss from full participation in American life. I suspect the Gipper would be proud.