

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90; Universal Service Reform – Mobility Fund, WT Docket No. 10-208*

Janie Corley co-owns a farm and local mini-golf course in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. She's got plenty of customers.¹ But the crowd isn't necessarily there to play a round of mini-golf. Instead, the small space surrounding the cashier is a wireless "sweet spot." It's the one place you can be sure to get a signal. So locals clamor around the cashier to send their e-mails or make their phone calls.

Folks in Hopkinsville will tell you that it's not exactly a mobile hotspot. They don't even need a wireless coverage map to know that. And they are joined by millions of rural Americans whose phones too often can't give them high-speed Internet access

In February, we allocated \$4.53 billion over ten years to address this problem by building 4G LTE mobile networks in rural communities. But to make sure these funds actually go toward expanding mobile coverage, as opposed to duplicating private capital, we sought input on a "challenge process." We hoped this process would help us create an accurate map of unserved areas eligible for Mobility Fund II subsidies.

Working together, my colleagues and I have struck the right balances in this challenge process. Having carriers submit maps based on uniform parameters, which parties can then challenge, creates a fair opportunity for both the challengers and the challenged. And on a bipartisan basis, we have made some important revisions which should lead to a more robust challenge process. For instance, we now require confidential disclosure of the parameters that carriers used in their propagation models (such as signal strength and clutter). This will let potential challengers see if an area is actually likely to meet a certain service threshold. We have also provided substantially more time for the stages of the challenge process and made it easier for state and local governments to submit a challenge. In short, we have established a process calibrated to be fair to all parties and to deliver mobile broadband to rural America.

Thank you for the leadership of the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force who handled this order simultaneously with the CAF II Comment PN: Kirk Burgee, Chelsea Fallon, Michael Janson, and Thom Parisi. And thank you to the all other staff who worked on this important order: from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau: Rita Cookmeyer, Chas Eberle, Ben Freeman, Jessie Friend, Nese Guendelsberger, Audra Hale-Maddox, Katie Hinton, Jonathan McCormack, Gary Michaels, Murtaza Nasafi, Kelly Quinn, Paroma Sanyal, Jim Schlichting, Christiaan Segura, Karen Sprung, Don Stockdale, Patrick Sun, Tom Tran, and Margie Weiner; from the Wireline Competition Bureau: Ying Ke, Ken Lynch, Alex Minard, and Gilbert Smith; from the Office of General Counsel: Bill Dever, Keith McCrickard, and Bill Richardson; from the Office of Native Affairs and Policy: Sayuri Rajapakse; and from the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis: Paul LaFontaine.

¹ Terena Bell, How Cellular Dead Zones Hurt Rural Towns, The American Conservative (Mar. 17, 2017), <http://tinyurl.com/y9puep9f>.