

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Connect America Fund; ETC Annual Reports and Certifications; Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 14-98, CC Docket No. 01-92.

April is Stress Awareness Month. It is also Pets Are Wonderful Month. And National Occupational Therapy Month, National Garden Month, National Older Americans Month, National Better Hearing and Speech Month, National Multiple Birth Awareness Month, and STD Awareness Month.

It's also National Food Month. Or more specifically, it's National Pecan Month, National Soy Foods Month, National Soft Pretzel Month, and Fresh Florida Tomato Month!

Since everyone else is making this stuff up, we decided April would be Infrastructure Month at the FCC. If we are going to close the digital divide in this country and see ubiquitous 5G, then companies must be able to build next-generation networks. These networks will be the foundation for bringing economic opportunity and job creation to every corner of the United States.

The Order before us makes the first simple but needed change to the stand-alone broadband rules the FCC adopted just last year. Our current rules say that high cost carriers will lose all universal support for capital expenses on a construction project if the average costs per location exceeds a company-specific threshold. And so a carrier may have to exclude certain high-cost homes from a project entirely in order to avoid losing all funding for the project, even if including those homes would be more efficient in the long-run. Today we amend this rule to only disallow expenses above the threshold—encouraging efficient builds without increasing the cost to taxpayers.

This change will help ensure that a quirk in our rules doesn't stand between carriers willing to deploy broadband in areas that cost more to serve and consumers in those areas who want and need Internet access. This is just the latest example of how we intend to promote broadband deployment to help close the digital divide.

Thank you to Ted Burmeister, Lisa Hone, Doug Klein, Rick Mallen, Alex Minard, Kris Monteith, Ryan Palmer, and Suzanne Yelen for helping us kick off Infrastructure Month.