

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI
APPROVING IN PART AND CONCURRING IN PART**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Nowhere in America is the digital divide as stark as it is on Tribal lands. Too many Native Americans today are on the wrong side of that divide. That's why this *Order* is so welcome. To be sure, the particulars are indeed particular: the *Order* allows certain rate-of-return carriers serving Tribal communities to recover higher levels of operational expenses, given the unique and challenging circumstances that make it more expensive to serve Tribal lands. But the end result will be straightforward: more and better Internet access for residents of Tribal lands.

Of course, more needs to be done. That's why, for example, the FCC recently agreed to solicit public input on the adoption of a Tribal Broadband Factor, which would provide additional financial assistance to carriers serving Tribal lands. But the instant *Order* is an important one that will help bring digital opportunity to struggling communities.

To be sure, this *Order* is not the one I originally proposed over a year ago in February 2017, shortly after becoming Chairman. Were the pen solely my own, I would have extended support to even more carriers that serve Tribal lands. And for many months, we actually had three votes for this approach. Unfortunately, our office was informed that one of those votes was set in quicksand, and would disappear were the vote actually called. Therefore, in the interest of finally getting something done, I chose to find agreement with those commissioners who were willing to work in good faith on ways to help carriers serving Tribal lands. The agreement we were able to reach—the agreement reflected in this *Order*—thus doesn't help certain carriers that my original proposal would have benefited, such as Mescalero Apache Telecom, Inc. in New Mexico.