

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

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

To help achieve the Commission's number one priority, closing the digital divide, we provide billions of dollars each year in high-cost universal service support to carriers to deploy modern, high-speed broadband networks to unserved Americans living in rural areas. These networks are essential to bringing digital opportunity to every American.

I've seen firsthand the impact of these universal service-funded rural networks across the country. Just a few weeks ago, in Mandan, North Dakota, I met with a consumer getting a fiber broadband connection for the first time. I saw his sense of wonder as we talked about how he and his family would use this new outlet to the world. And I met two of his neighbors who had recently been connected: One was a software engineer who could finally work more regularly from home, letting him spend more time with his family, and another had started a successful baby clothing business in her basement because she had that vital broadband connection.

But Americans like these only get the full benefits of connectivity if the carriers receiving universal service support follow through—if they actually deliver the speed and responsiveness that they committed to provide. Most such carriers must build out their networks to specific numbers of homes and businesses. But that's only half of the equation. Deploying a broadband network means providing the network speed and latency that consumers and the Commission expect, to ensure that rural Americans are not relegated to second-class service.

President Reagan was fond of the old Russian proverb, "Trust, but verify." And today's *Order* is about the verify part of the equation. Specifically, we must verify that carriers are not only building the infrastructure, but also supplying the service quality required by our rules.

The testing methodologies we adopt today are rigorous because we must ensure that both American taxpayers (who contribute to the Universal Service Fund) and rural consumers are getting their money's worth. But these methodologies are also workable for all carriers. We recognize that carriers of different sizes and technical and financial capabilities have different needs. So today, we decide to closely review the existing testing methodologies and make targeted changes that will provide flexibility and eliminate unnecessary burdens on carriers, while still ensuring that carriers are accountable to consumers, taxpayers, and the Commission.

Whether it is a two-way video chat between a doctor and her patient, a student collaborating with classmates in real-time on a school project, or just a family streaming their favorite movies and television, rural Americans must have a broadband connection that will consistently deliver the performance that modern applications require. And today's *Order* will help ensure that's the case.

I would like to thank the staff who contributed to this item, including Mikelle Bonan, Cheryl Callahan, Justin Faulb, Ian Forbes, Sue McNeil, Alex Minard, Kris Monteith, Ryan Palmer, Gilbert Smith, Joseph Sorresso, Stephen Wang, and Suzanne Yelen of the Wireline Competition Bureau; Joseph Calascione, Jonathan Campbell, Cha-Chi Fan, Alec MacDonell, Giulia McHenry, and Cathy Zima of the Office of Economics and Analytics; Michael Carlson, William Dever, Tom Johnson, David Konczal, Rick Mallen, and Linda Oliver of the Office of General Counsel; and Martin Doczkat, Padma Krishnaswamy, and Paul Murray of the Office of Engineering and Technology.