

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Amendment of Part 74 of the Commission's Rules Regarding FM Translator Interference*, MB Docket No. 19-40.

The concept of interference can cause significant controversy in the sports world. For example, most Louisianans were outraged earlier this year when officials failed to call pass interference near the end of regulation in the NFC Championship Game, likely denying the New Orleans Saints a spot in the Super Bowl. And last weekend, the Kentucky Derby set off a vigorous debate when the horse that crossed the finish line first was disqualified over alleged interference with other horses, in violation of the Commonwealth's horse racing regulations.¹

These incidents demonstrate the importance of having clear rules for defining interference and the right procedures for resolving interference claims.

What's true for sports is true for spectrum. And so today, we simplify the process for resolving complaints regarding interference caused by FM translators. FM translators are an increasingly important resource for broadcasters. Indeed, our successful AM revitalization initiative has already resulted in hundreds of new FM translators starting up. AM broadcasters around the country have told me that the chance to get FM translators has allowed them to improve their programming, expand their listenership, and stabilize their financial position.

But with more translators on the air has come an uptick in interference complaints from primary FM stations. So last May, we set out to review the interference complaint process. And today, after a lot of hard work and consultation with stakeholders, we give everyone more certainty by streamlining and clarifying the process for resolving complaints. Success here is simple: We want to receive fewer meritless complaints and make those we do get easier to resolve.

Today's *Report and Order* accomplishes that goal by carefully balancing the interests of primary FM stations and translators. Most important, it gives translators the flexibility to move to any open same-band channel to resolve interference claims. It also standardizes the information that must be provided in complaints and establishes a minimum number of listener statements that must accompany complaints. Finally, it sets a contour limit for actionable complaints while providing for a waiver process in unusual circumstances.

Resolving FM interference may not be as glamorous or fashionable as resolving interference in the NFL or the Kentucky Derby, but the staff in our Media Bureau nonetheless handled this difficult matter with skill and aplomb. I want to thank James Bradshaw, Michelle Carey, Robert Gates, Christine Goepp, Tom Horan, Holly Saurer, Lisa Scanlan, and Albert Shuldiner from the Media Bureau and David Konczal from the Office of General Counsel for their work on this item.

¹ I am not making this up. See 810 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:016 (2019). Cf. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Ch. Xxxix (1853) ("The one great principle of the English law is, to make business for itself.").