

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Streamlining Licensing Procedures for Small Satellites*, IB Docket No. 18-86

Under my leadership, the FCC has been working hard to promote American innovation in space. After all, the space sector has had a major impact on national life, producing new inventions and technologies that have transformed our society for the better. Impelled by the space race, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory developed advanced digital imaging technology. This technology ultimately helped to create computer-aided tomography (CAT) scans, which diagnose life-threatening conditions in American patients every day. The explosive charges used to separate devices on the Space Shuttle were tweaked and miniaturized to operate the “jaws of life,” which extricates the victims of horrific car crashes from their vehicles. And who can forget Tang?

Needless to say, innovation in space is hard. And burdensome regulations can make it harder. Despite the fact that satellite technology has diversified dramatically in recent years—from tiny CubeSats to shimmering lightsails, soaring around the Earth on beams of sunlight—our rules for processing satellite applications haven’t kept up. We still require small satellites, which have minimal mass and short orbital lifetimes, to jump through the same regulatory hoops as larger, heavier satellites that may stay in low Earth orbit for many years. But there is no reason why a satellite the size of a shoebox, with the life expectancy of a guinea pig, should be regulated the same way as a satellite the size of a school bus that will stay in orbit for centuries.

That’s why the FCC is creating a new, separate, streamlined licensing procedure for small satellites. This optional application process for small satellites is grounded in our Part 25 rules. In order to qualify for this process, an application must include ten or fewer satellites, and those satellites must have an on-orbit lifetime of six years or less, a maximum wet mass of 180 kilograms, and other characteristics designed to reduce the risk of orbital debris and spectrum interference.

Those qualifying for this process would submit a streamlined application, be exempted from the Commission’s processing round procedures, be granted a one-year grace period from posting of a surety bond, and pay a smaller application fee. In other words, they would face a shorter and less expensive application process.

This streamlined process would be in addition to, and not a replacement for, the existing processes for satellite authorization under Parts 5 (experimental), 25, and 97 (amateur) of the Commission’s rules. And again, no one will be required to use the streamlined process; it may be invoked at the option of those who qualify.

My gratitude to the many Commission staffers working to make it easier and cheaper to license small satellites. I’d like to thank Jose Albuquerque, Stephen Duall, Jennifer Gilsean, Samuel Karty, Karl Kensinger, Brian Murff, Sankar Persaud, Tom Sullivan, Troy Tanner, and Merissa Velez from the International Bureau; Don Stockdale and Joel Taubenblatt from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; Ira Keltz, Julius Knapp, and Nicholas Oros from the Office of Engineering and Technology; Dick Kwiakowski and Emily Talaga from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Ashley Boizelle, Deborah Broderson, David Horowitz, and Linda Oliver from the Office of the General Counsel; and Mika Savir and Deena Shetler from the Office of the Managing Director.