STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI


The U.S. commercial satellite industry has enjoyed substantial growth in recent years, dominating market share for satellite manufacturing and launch services in 2019. Satellite launches are on the rise, as are throughput speeds and data capacity. Indeed, as we enter a new space age, one might say that “the sky’s the limit” in terms of satellite systems’ potential for expanding connectivity and bridging the digital divide.

This investment and innovation in space-based services has led to increased demand for spectrum to be used by satellite systems. As a result, ensuring that we have efficiently allocated sufficient spectrum for satellite services is vital to this industry’s continued success. Today, we advance this objective by initiating a proceeding aimed at permitting Geostationary Orbit (or GSO) space stations in the Fixed Satellite Service to use the 17.3–17.7 GHz band on a co-primary (or co-equal) basis for downlink communications, as well as the neighboring 17.7–17.8 GHz band for FSS downlink communications on a non-protected basis. Combined, these changes would increase intensive and efficient use of the 17.3–17.8 GHz band by expanding downlink capacity for high-throughput satellite communications. This should facilitate the deployment of advanced satellite systems that will benefit all Americans.

Consumers stand to benefit from expanded use of the 17.3–17.8 GHz band and the routine processing of applications for licenses. The satellite industry is expected to continue growing at a record-setting pace, and the Commission’s proposed changes would help operators to hit the ground running with greater spectrum flexibility and a streamlined licensing process that is focused on getting Americans connected at greater speeds and lower costs.

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