

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Rural Call Completion*, WC Docket No. 13-39.

All Americans should have confidence that when a telephone call is made to them, their phone will ring. But that's not always the case in rural or remote parts of the United States. Call failures, ranging from dead air to messages incorrectly saying a number is not in service, are a nuisance that can have costly repercussions. And unfortunately, despite FCC rules adopted in 2013, this problem has not gone away.

Today's *Order* reflects what I believe will be a more effective approach for tackling rural call completion problems. Specifically, the *Order* requires "covered providers" to monitor the performance of their "intermediate providers." Intermediate providers are entities that carry a call somewhere along the way to its destination and are often the cause of call completion problems. Holding covered providers responsible for addressing call completion issues should reduce the likelihood of a call failure in the middle of the calling "chain."

Additionally, we end a paperwork requirement which has proven to be unduly burdensome and not as helpful as we had hoped it would be. The Wireline Competition Bureau found last year that the rural call completion data collection that began in 2013 "provides a less than clear understanding of the overall state of rural call completion performance."¹ In particular, the Bureau reported that problems with the information collection "preclude us from drawing firm conclusions from the data."² That just doesn't cut it. And the requirement mentioned above—that covered providers monitor their intermediate brethren—makes this data collection expendable.

One last note: Recently, Congress enacted the Improving Rural Call Quality and Reliability Act of 2017. This legislation imposes new obligations on the FCC—obligations upon which the *Further Notice* focuses. To help us as we consider how to implement the law, we preserve for now the recording and retention requirements for the data that covered providers previously submitted to the FCC. This ensures that this information will remain available to the Commission, if needed, as we carry out the Act.

Thanks to the many staff who worked on this item. In particular: Pam Arluk, Matthew Collins, Adam Copeland, Melissa Droller Kinkel, Alex Espinoza, Victoria Goldberg, Alexis Johns, Daniel Kahn, Edward Krachmer, Kris Monteith, Eric Ralph, Steve Rosenberg, Zachary Ross, Arielle Roth, and D'wana Terry of Wireline Competition Bureau; Rizwan Chowdhry, Margaret Dailey, Jeffrey Gee, Rosemary Harold, Robert Krinsky, Kalun Lee, Keith Morgan, Geoffrey Starks, and Aamer Zain of the Enforcement Bureau; James Brown, Micah Caldwell, Renee Moore, Karen Peltz Strauss, Suzy Singleton, and Sharon Wright of the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau; Martha Heller and Diana Sokolow of the Media Bureau; Eric Burger of the Office of Strategic Planning & Policy Analysis; and Terry Cavanaugh, Richard Mallen, Linda Oliver, and Bill Richardson of the Office of General Counsel.

¹ *Rural Call Completion*, WC Docket No. 13-39, Report, 32 FCC Rcd 4980, 4981, para. 2 (WCB, 2017).

² *Id.*