

TOM MARINO

10TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
REGULATORY REFORM, COMMERCIAL AND
ANTITRUST LAW

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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November 1, 2018

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Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Commissioners,

The digital divide leaves more than 19 million rural Americans without any access to broadband internet. As a Representative from a largely rural district in Pennsylvania, I take seriously my responsibility to bring affordable and reliable broadband access to my constituents. To further that effort, I recently introduced H.R. 6871, the "Rural Broadband Connectivity Act of 2018," to incentivize private investment in rural broadband infrastructure.

While this legislation is a good first step, I believe we must do more. As Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law, I believe we must foster a regulatory environment that encourages competition in this area.

As you may know, a number of internet service providers are interested in using a technology called TV white spaces (TVWS) to deliver affordable broadband to rural customers. Many providers, however, have expressed frustration that regulatory uncertainty hinders the needed investments and innovation in TVWS technology that would improve performance and reduce costs.

In my view, the Commission has a strong role to play in removing the regulatory barriers that are discouraging the further development of TVWS technology. To that end, I respectfully ask the Commission to finalize its outstanding proceedings and adopt appropriate technical rules that ensure sufficient spectrum is available below 700 MHz for unlicensed broadband. Furthermore, I ask that the Commission consider implementing policies that would enable the growth of IoT opportunities in precision agriculture and broadband connectivity on specialized vehicles such as school buses.

I sincerely appreciate your efforts to bridge the digital divide and hope you will consider taking action to remove the regulatory barriers hindering TVWS development, so broadband can reach more consumers in my rural district.

Sincerely,

Tom Marino
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 31, 2018

The Honorable Tom Marino
U.S. House of Representatives
2242 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Marino:

Thank you for your letter regarding the importance of affordable and reliable broadband in communities with limited access. Having grown up in rural Kansas, I know what the digital divide is like. That's why closing that divide is my top priority—and one that the Commission is working on all fronts to support. And that's why this year we streamlined rules to deploy the next-generation of wireless connectivity, known as 5G, encouraged carriers to replace aging copper with super-fast fiber on an expedited basis, launched the first auction for millimeter-wave spectrum, increased federal support for our rural healthcare program and for small, rural carriers serving high-cost areas, and held our nation's first reverse auction for fixed broadband support. The results of these actions will be felt throughout America, and especially in rural America, where as you know the case to build out broadband is all the harder for any business to make.

I also agree with you that unlicensed spectrum in the TV white spaces—those channels on which no broadcaster is broadcasting—promises an opportunity for new wireless broadband deployments. That's why I have asked staff to continue working on the many details left unfinished by the prior Administration, including resolution of how to ensure database accuracy. This is no simple task—after all, TV white space devices must fully protect all incumbent services like broadcasting, private land-mobile radio, radio astronomy, and Wireless Medical Telemetry Service. But it is one the Commission's excellent staff is well-positioned to carry out.

Thank you for your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ajit V. Pai".

Ajit V. Pai