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October 16, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

On Wednesday morning, the President of the United States threatened to revoke a broadcaster's license because he disagreed with the content of that station's speech.¹ This is an affront to the First Amendment, freedom of the press, and founding principles of the Communications Act. A robust, free press is the cornerstone of our democracy – ensuring public access to news without governmental meddling or censorship.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), created by Congress in 1934, has a long and proud history of independence. I write today to ask you to honor that independence and demonstrate that America's institutions cannot be bullied into abandoning our core values. I ask you to commit in writing that you will not vote against any broadcast license renewal application in a manner that is inconsistent with the First Amendment.

I am sure you can appreciate what kind of chilling effect a threat like this issued from the oval office might have on newsrooms – and especially on small and independent stations. As FCC Chairman, sworn to uphold both the Constitution and the Communications Act, you have a duty to condemn this attack and reassure our nation and our journalists that you will stand up for them and protect and defend their fundamental freedoms.

The President's tweets were alarming in both his disregard of the FCC's independence and flagrant disrespect for freedom of the press. I ask for your unwavering commitment that you will ensure the First Amendment remains a cornerstone of our democracy and that you will not follow through on this direction from the President. I respectfully request a written statement from you regarding your position on this matter no later than November 1, 2017. A similar letter has been sent to your colleagues.

¹ On Wednesday, October 11 at 9:55 AM, President Trump tweeted, "With all of the Fake News coming out of NBC and the Networks, at what point is it appropriate to challenge their License? Bad for country!" (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918112884630093825>). President Trump followed up on that tweet in the evening at 8:09 PM, "Network news has become so partisan, distorted and fake that licenses must be challenged and, if appropriate, revoked. Not fair to public!" (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918267396493922304>).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Blumenthal" clearly legible.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

February 8, 2018

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter regarding First Amendment freedoms and the independence of the Federal Communications Commission.

Throughout my tenure at the Commission, I have consistently been a strong supporter of the First Amendment, and the FCC under my leadership has protected and will continue to protect the First Amendment. Moreover, I have made clear that the FCC does not have the authority to revoke a license of a broadcast station based on the content of a particular newscast. Additionally, I have long championed the FCC's independence. Accordingly, I can also assure you that under my leadership the Commission's review of any matter associated with any broadcast license will not be impacted by political pressure from elected officials.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Ajit V. Pai", is written over a printed name.

Ajit V. Pai