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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

VICE-CHAIR

SUBCOMMITTEES:

NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, CHAIR
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE UNITED STATES

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEES:

MILITARY PERSONNEL

READINESS

NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS, CO-CHAIR

REGIONAL WHIP

376

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
455 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Pai,

In May 2018, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Transforming the 2.5 GHz¹. This proposal would establish local priority filing windows for new Educational Broadband Service (EBS) licenses for Tribes and educational entities. We write in strong support of this initiative to improve Tribal access to broadband.

Broadband is an essential utility that is critical to accessing public safety, education, and healthcare, as well as participating in the 21st Century global market. As you are aware, access to broadband has remained a luxury in many rural communities, including in Tribal nations across the United States. The Commission recently reported that just 36.2% of residents on Tribal lands in New Mexico have access to fixed broadband services. Broadband access on Tribal lands remains comparable to some third world countries, which is unacceptable in the United States.

One potential solution to close the digital divide in these areas is to provide Tribes and rural educators an opportunity to apply for EBS spectrum via local priority filing windows. We commend the Commission for including this provision in its proposed rule and strongly support this plan to increase access to broadband in rural areas.

EBS has proven to be a critical tool to deliver broadband to Native nations like Havasupai Tribe, which is located at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and the Nisqually Indian Tribe in Washington, in addition to rural communities in California, Michigan, and Virginia. Unfortunately, the Commission has not provided opportunities for Tribes and rural educators to access this spectrum for over 23 years, which has impaired public safety and health care modernization, resulting in loss of life on tribal lands.

We strongly urge the Commission to finish licensing unassigned EBS spectrum by establishing local priority filing windows for Tribes and rural educators. Allowing this invaluable resource to be auctioned will further deny Tribes and educators an opportunity to connect, as most do not have the resources to compete in an auction. Additionally, commercial operators already control vast quantities of spectrum in these same rural areas, but simply have not deployed services to those in need. Giving local communities an opportunity to access this spectrum will close the digital divide and homework gap. We urge the Commission to make certain these opportunities exist when issuing final EBS rules.

Sincerely,

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Cc: Commissioner Brendan Carr
Cc: Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Cc: Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Cc: Commissioner Geoffrey Starks

¹ WT Docket No. 18-120; DA 18-647.



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 15, 2019

The Honorable Debra Haaland
U.S. House of Representatives
1237 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Haaland:

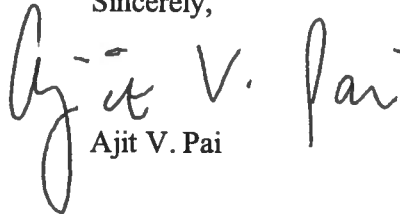
Thank you for your letter supporting the Federal Communications Commission's recent notice of proposed rulemaking regarding the 2.5 GHz band.

Closing the digital divide is the FCC's top priority. Among many other steps, the Commission recently addressed this priority by adopting a report and order aiming to maximize the potential of the 2.5 GHz band to bring advanced wireless services to those who for too long have been on the wrong side of that divide.

Nowhere is that divide more starkly pronounced than in Indian Country. That's why, as part of the recent order, the FCC unanimously agreed to establish a priority filing window in this band for Tribal Nations in order to enable them to serve rural Tribal areas. We want the example of the Havasupai Tribe, which as you observe is using this spectrum to positive effect at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, to be a new norm in Tribal areas.

Thank you for sharing your views on this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,


Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 15, 2019

The Honorable Ruben Gallego
U.S. House of Representatives
1218 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gallego:

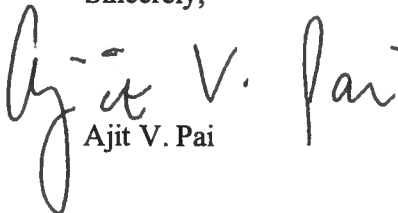
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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 15, 2019

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
U.S. House of Representatives
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Grijalva:

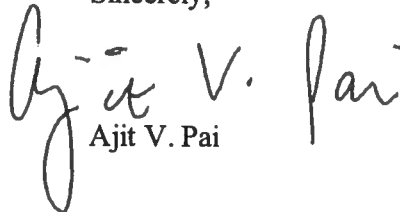
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Ajit V. Pai