

June 22, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

We appreciate your efforts to prioritize broadband deployment and support in rural America. Universal service – the requirement that Americans in even the most remote areas of the nation should have access to comparable services – includes access to reliable, affordable broadband. Therefore, we urge you to move forward with the Remote Areas Fund (RAF) to appropriately target limited Universal Service Fund (USF) support towards the most difficult to serve areas in our states that remain unserved.

The RAF has the potential to take another critical step towards addressing the current digital divide. We are encouraged by the Commission's recent reaffirmation that it "will seek to commence the Remote Areas Fund auction no later than one year after the commencement of the [Connect America Fund] Phase II auction." Many of the RAF-eligible communities still lack access to a viable broadband option. Therefore, we believe the RAF must be structured to reach these extremely high-cost areas throughout rural America.

Mindful of the Commission's objective of targeting these unserved or underserved areas, we believe technology-neutral rules will encourage broad and robust provider participation and will increase the likelihood that these remote areas will be served and deliver the most value per limited resources spent. Given that USF support is designed towards areas where there is no business case to offer comparable services at comparable rates, the Commission should structure the RAF so that providers, regardless of technology, can compete to serve unserved or underserved areas that have the greatest need for new broadband deployment.

We believe the RAF has the opportunity to narrow the broadband gap in the most remote, hardest to reach places in rural America. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you to ensure this universal service requirement becomes a reality.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

CC: Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
CC: Mike O'Rielly, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

July 18, 2017

The Honorable Jerry Moran
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Moran:

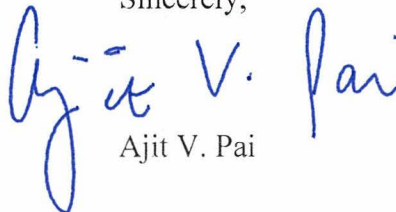
Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to move forward with connecting the most remote, hardest-to-reach places in rural America. Today, if you live in rural America, there's a better than 1-in-4 chance that you lack access to fixed high-speed broadband at home, compared to a 1-in-50 probability in our cities. That's unacceptable. Like you, I believe that all Americans should have the opportunity to participate in the digital economy—that's why bridging the digital divide is the FCC's top priority.

As you note, Americans in even the most remote areas of the nation should have access to comparable services and our rules should deliver the most value for the American taxpayer. That's why I was pleased to move forward with the bipartisan *CAF Phase II Auctions Order* earlier this year, which the Commission has now targeted to include extremely high-cost areas as well as the high-cost areas that were always part of the Connect America Fund. And that's why I was pleased that the Commission agreed to commence the Remote Areas Fund, which like the CAF Phase II Auction will employ technology-neutral rules, no later than one year after the commencement of the CAF Phase II auction.

Our agenda for the open meeting on August 3 will feature several items that will help bridge the digital divide, including a Public Notice to initiate the pre-auction process for the CAF Phase II auction. The CAF Phase II Auction will offer almost \$2 billion over the next ten years to broadband providers that commit to offer voice and broadband services to fixed locations in unserved high-cost areas in our country. With this Public Notice, we are seeking comment on the procedures to be used during this auction. Moving forward now will put us on track to conduct the auction in 2018.

I appreciate your interest in this matter and I look forward to continue working with you as the Commission moves towards bridging the digital divide for all Americans, even those in remote areas. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Ajit" written in a large, flowing script, and "V. Pai" written in a smaller, more formal script.

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

July 18, 2017

The Honorable Joe Manchin
United States Senate
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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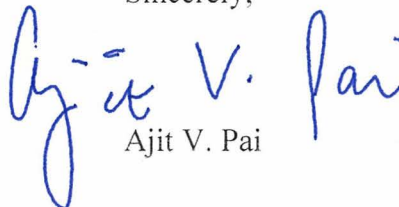
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Ajit V. Pai