



TOM O'HALLERAN

1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

329

May 31, 2019

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Chairman Pai,

Thank you for appearing before the Energy and Commerce Committee to answer our questions regarding the ongoing activity at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to modernize our telecommunications ecosystem and closing the digital divide.


As the U.S. Representative for Arizona's First Congressional District, I am writing to seek additional clarification on matters related to the FCC's work in facilitating broadband deployment to rural communities. Following the FCC's recent *2019 Broadband Deployment Report*, which contains data that may overstate current connectivity levels, it is becoming abundantly clear that more work must be done to connect rural communities to the internet, so they may compete in a modern and global economy.

To this end, please provide detailed answers to the following questions:

- 1) The FCC has had an open proceeding to modernize Form 477 for determining where broadband coverage exists and where it does not. Where does the Commission currently stand in this proceeding, and when can Congress expect a rulemaking?
- 2) The recent Connect America Fund Phase II auction fund disbursements announced on May 14th are sorely needed to invest in infrastructure across rural America. What are the potential ramifications of awarding funding for broadband infrastructure without an accurate National Broadband Map?
- 3) Last month, you announced with the President the "Rural Digital Opportunity Fund" to invest \$20 billion over 10 years to bring high-speed connections to rural communities. Specifically, how will this fund be additive, and not duplicative, to already existing Universal Service Fund programs?

Thank you for your attention to these questions as we all strive to expeditiously close the digital divide and bring connectivity to Rural America. Please don't hesitate to reach out to my office at 202-225-3361, with any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. O'Halleran', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

July 31, 2019

The Honorable Tom O'Halleran
U.S. House of Representatives
126 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman O'Halleran:

Thank you for your letter regarding broadband mapping. Closing the digital divide is my top priority. I have seen for myself in 45 states, including Arizona, and the territories of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands what affordable high-speed Internet access can do for a community—for its families, its schools, its hospitals, its farms, its businesses—as well as the impact of its absence.

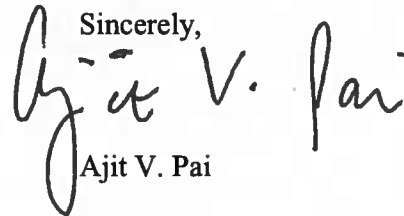
I agree that using updated and accurate broadband deployment data is critical to bridging the digital divide. We need to understand where broadband is available and where it is not to target our efforts and direct funding to areas that are most in needed. That is why the Commission began a top-to-bottom review of the Form 477 process to ensure that broadband data was more accurate, granular, and ultimately useful to the Commission and the public.

After a thorough review of the record and the painstaking work of our career staff, I circulated a Report and Order for consideration at the FCC's August Open Meeting that would result in more granular and more accurate broadband maps through the creation of the Digital Opportunity Data Collection. That means requiring broadband providers to report where they actually offer service below the census block level and incorporating public feedback to ensure up to date and accurate broadband deployment maps.

These updated maps would be used to focus funding to expand broadband through future initiatives such as the second phase of the proposed Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund will complement and build on the success of the CAF Phase II auction of fixed broadband support, which allocated \$1.488 billion to expand broadband to more than 700,000 unserved rural homes and small businesses over the next 10 years. In Arizona, more than \$28.1 million was authorized to providers in May and June, which will connect nearly 7,000 homes and businesses to modern broadband. Once implemented, the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund would provide over \$20 billion over the next decade to connect millions of rural homes and businesses to high-speed broadband, representing the FCC's single biggest step yet to close the digital divide.

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I appreciate your interest in working with the FCC to close the digital divide and look forward to continuing to collaborate on this issue. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai