

DOUG COLLINS

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June 3, 2019

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

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing in regards to efforts by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to more accurately understand the availability of mobile and fixed broadband service in the United States.

Reliable broadband access is vital for rural communities to run their businesses, access educational resources, and operate public safety systems. Unfortunately, communities are often subject to subpar internet service, often at the hands of a functional monopoly.

I have long advocated for a larger focus on rural broadband and am pleased that President Trump has displayed a commitment to focusing on infrastructure, including rural broadband. I am proud to have introduced the Connect America Fund (CAF) Accountability Act (H.R. 427) in the House, a bill that would require internet service providers (ISPs) that receive taxpayer dollars through the CAF program to report additional information on the broadband speeds they are providing consumers in reports to the FCC. The additional transparency will ensure that more accurate speeds are being reported to the FCC, allowing the commission to better oversee and direct CAF dollars. Additionally, last Congress I introduced the Gigabit Opportunity (GO) Act (H.R. 2870), legislation to encourage investment in areas affected by poor internet service.

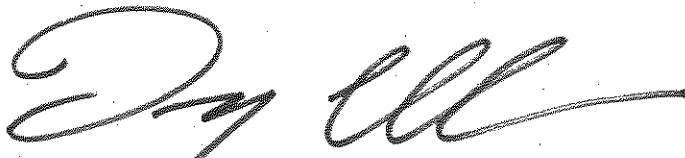
Under the Form 477 Data Program the FCC collects data from providers on broadband services, local telephone service competition, and mobile telephony services. Twice per year, all providers of fixed broadband are required to provide a list of all census blocks where fixed broadband service is currently available. Unfortunately, under this system that directly informs the FCC's broadband availability maps, providers can report a particular census block as "served" if just one location receives service. This is particularly detrimental in rural areas that have large census blocks and may be considered served if only a single neighborhood or location in that block has broadband service. Additionally, provider-reported data for both fixed and mobile broadband service lacks independent verification and validation, raising concerns about the accuracy and reliability of such data in determining broadband availability.

As the FCC explores ways to improve the quality, accuracy and usefulness of the data it collects on fixed and mobile voice and broadband service, I request that you give consideration to a more

granular method of reporting fixed broadband data—such as through the use of shapefiles that digitally represent geographic areas in which a customer could expect to receive broadband service. Such a method—already utilized to determine mobile broadband service—could allow the FCC to more precisely determine areas that are completely unserved by fixed broadband. Furthermore, I encourage the FCC to develop processes to better verify and validate provider-reported broadband data in order to make the most optimal funding and financing decisions.

It is critical to ensure that inaccurate information will not result in subpar or a complete lack of access to broadband. I look forward to working with you as the FCC continues to ensure Americans have access to reliable broadband.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Collins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug Collins
Ninth Congressional District of Georgia



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

July 31, 2019

The Honorable Doug Collins
U.S. House of Representatives
1504 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Collins:

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 of course, the 9th Congressional District in Georgia, 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, after I became Chairman, 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.

I appreciate your continued interest in working with the FCC to close the digital divide. I'm particularly thankful for your leadership in introducing the Gigabit Opportunity (GO) Act during the 115th Congress. By streamlining regulations to encourage broadband deployment and establishing targeted tax incentives for entrepreneurs to build those networks, we can empower millions of Americans, rural and urban alike. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" and last name "Pai" being the most prominent parts.
Ajit V. Pai