

**REMARKS OF AJIT PAI
CHAIRMAN, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

WASHINGTON, DC

JANUARY 24, 2017

Good afternoon, FCC! Thank you for the very kind reception.

It is wonderful to be with you—but not because of my new role.

It's because I love this place. I love coming across the 14th Street Bridge in the morning and seeing our building. I love entering the parking lot and exchanging Amharic and Spanish greetings with my friends who manage the lot. I love entering the lobby and bantering with the security officers who do such a great job keeping us safe. I love coming up the elevator and chatting with you about everything from the weather to your families. I love walking into my office, pouring about a gallon of coffee into my infamous Reese's Peanut Butter Cups mug, and starting my day.

Most of all, though, I love working with you. As you might know, I started as a staffer in the Office of General Counsel ten years ago. I've spent almost all of the past decade with you. I have gotten to know and admire you. It's hard to think of any other government agency filled with people who have that rare combination of dedication, expertise, and collegiality. And so, as I enter this new position, I want you to know that I value and respect each and every one of you. I may now have the fancy title of Chairman (although I urge you to call me Ajit), but the credit for our work primarily belongs to you.

Those laurels also belong to the Commissioners I am fortunate to call my friends. I want to recognize my eighth-floor colleagues. Mignon Clyburn needs no introduction. She has served with distinction at this agency since 2009, leading this agency in 2013, and is a passionate champion of the public interest. Mike O'Rielly has been rolling up his sleeves since 2013 and has been a thought-leader on issues as varied as process reform and international transactional review. Commissioners Clyburn and O'Rielly, I thank you for your service to the country. I look forward to working with you and your talented staffs in the time to come.

I also want to express my gratitude to two terrific FCC officials whose work was critical in ensuring a smooth transition: Michele Ellison and Mindy Ginsburg. Each of them has known me since I was a new lawyer here, getting lost looking for the bathroom. Each of them was so helpful over the past few weeks, supplying our teams with any and all the information we might need (not including the location of the bathrooms—I think I've finally figured that out). Michele and Mindy, thank you for toiling over the past ten weeks to help our agency continue its operations seamlessly.

And I also want to acknowledge those who have come before me. Chairman Wheeler brought to this office determination and a commitment not to shy away from the tough issues. Chairwoman Clyburn seized the baton and quickly delivered results. Chairman Genachowski worked hard to find consensus and common ground whenever possible. Chairman Copps guided us through the digital television transition with a steady hand. Chairman Martin modernized our rules and encouraged cross-sector competition. And Chairman Powell cemented one of this

agency's top priorities—bringing broadband to all Americans. This is a solid foundation to build upon—and these are big shoes to fill.

Now that we've made the transition, where do we go from here? Well, I have no doubt we're going to be busy. There are a lot of challenging issues on our plate.

One of the most significant things that I've seen during my time here is that there is a digital divide in this country—between those who can use from cutting-edge communications services and those who do not. I believe one of our core priorities going forward should be to close that divide—to do what's necessary to help the private sector build networks, send signals, and distribute information to American consumers, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or anything else. We must work to bring the benefits of the digital age to all Americans.

As the FCC confronts this and many other challenges, I want you to know this: No Chairman, no Commissioners can achieve results for the American people without your help. We need you. We need your ideas. We need your energy. I understand that not everyone will personally agree with every policy the FCC pursues. But I will do my best to hear all points of view—to approach every issue with a literal open door and a figurative open mind. And I know that you are the most professional staff any agency could be blessed with—because I saw that for myself when I was a staffer.

Speaking of being blessed, I often marvel at how fortunate I have been. I think of my late grandparents in India. One of whom lost his father young and had to drop out of high school to work; another ran a small spare auto parts store. I think of my parents, who came to this country 45 years ago with literally no assets other than \$10, a transistor radio, and a desire to achieve the American Dream. I think of all their sacrifices, all those risks they took, all those long hours they worked, all those moments when they must have worried about what the future would hold. None of them could ever have imagined that their grandson, their son would have the honor of being asked to lead by the President of the United States. I hope my tenure as Chairman will show me to be worthy of the sacrifices they've made for me and the lessons they've taught me. And I'm ever grateful that this wonderful country has given me and my family the opportunity to dream big.

Thank you again for your support. Now, it's time to get started! I'm excited to get to work alongside you on behalf of the American people.