

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc.*, File No. EB-IHD-16-00021748.

Today, the Federal Communications Commission proposes the largest forfeiture in the history of this agency for a violation of our sponsorship identification rules. Indeed, the proposed forfeiture of over \$13 million is more than *three times* any penalty that has ever been imposed for violating our sponsorship identification rules. Among other things, because of the seriousness of these violations, we have taken the base forfeiture amount for each and every apparent violation of our rules at issue here and adjusted it upward.

My dissenting colleagues, however, demanded that the Commission increase the amount of the proposed forfeiture here by over six times, to more than \$82 million. At no point, however, have they cited a single Commission precedent involving sponsorship identification—or any precedent from any other area for that matter—to justify their position. And a brief review of the Commission’s two most recent sponsorship identification actions, both taken under the prior Administration, reveals how divorced their demand is from past practice.

In 2016, the Enforcement Bureau and Cumulus entered into a consent decree to settle 178 violations of the Commission’s sponsorship identification rules. That consent decree involved a penalty of \$540,000, or approximately \$3,000 per violation. And in 2014, the Enforcement Bureau and Journal Broadcast Corporation entered into a consent decree to settle 27 violations of the Commission’s sponsorship identification rules. That consent decree involved a penalty of \$115,000, or approximately \$4,250 per violation.

In this *Notice of Apparent Liability*, we are proposing a forfeiture of \$13,376,200 for 1,723 apparent violations of our sponsorship identification rules. That works out to over \$7,700 per violation—a significantly higher penalty per violation than in recent cases but one that is appropriate given the factors spelled out in the *Notice of Apparent Liability*. By contrast, my colleagues have sought to propose a forfeiture of \$48,114 per violation, or 1,504% higher than the most recent penalty we’ve imposed. Their position deviates so wildly from our precedent that it will no doubt strike reasonable people as suspicious. But I will leave it to others to speculate as to why they wish to punish this particular company in this particular way.