

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Connect America Fund; ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 14-58.

One of the most significant lessons I've learned during my time at the Federal Communications Commission is that there is a digital divide in this country—between those who have access to cutting-edge communications services and those who do not. As I stated in my first public remarks as Chairman, I believe one of the FCC's top priorities going forward should be to close that divide. I am committed to doing what I can to ensure that all Americans benefit from the bounty of the digital age.

Today, the FCC begins to deliver on that commitment. In the first week of the newly-constituted Commission, and in our first vote, we adopt measures to aid the deployment of broadband infrastructure to unserved areas of rural New York. Specifically, by granting New York State's petition for a waiver of the Connect America Phase II auction program rules, we take common-sense, fiscally responsible steps to coordinate funding between the federal Universal Service Fund and the state's New NY Broadband Program, which aims to "ensur[e that] all New Yorkers have access to high-speed internet." By helping to provide Internet access to tens of thousands of locations in rural New York, we take the first of many steps toward bringing digital opportunity to all Americans.

Essential to this result was close, bipartisan collaboration among many officials at the state and federal level. In particular, I am grateful to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senator Charles Schumer, and Representative Chris Collins for working with me to ensure this federal-state partnership progressed from promise to paper. And I especially appreciate the hard work of the Commission's staff—specifically, Kris Monteith, Carol Matthey, Ryan Palmer, Alex Minard, Heidi Lankau, and Dana Zelman—and the New York State Broadband Program Office for working together to ensure a brighter future for rural New York.