

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI
AT THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION'S
BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

WASHINGTON, DC

JANUARY 23, 2018

Good morning. I have good news and bad news to share with you. The good news is that the government shutdown is over. The bad news is that Patriots are still in the Super Bowl.

On a more serious note, thank you all for coming today. And more importantly, thank you for your service on the Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee. I know that we've asked a lot of you as part of this voluntary effort. Some might say we've asked too much—that we've taken advantage of you by making you work so hard. But I see the demands we've placed on you as simply respecting your time and talent. Let me assure you that your work is greatly appreciated, and it's having an impact.

Special thanks to the BDAC's leadership team, especially your Chairwoman, Elizabeth Bowles, and Vice Chair, Kelleigh Cole. Thanks also to those who have gone the extra mile to lead our various working groups.

By coincidence, today also happens to be the one-year anniversary of the President appointing me the Chairman of the FCC. That marker meshes well with today's proceedings, for a couple of reasons.

First, the BDAC's work is critical to my top policy priority as FCC Chairman—closing the digital divide. I've long said that every American who wants to participate in the digital economy should be able to do so. And the plain reality is that if you live in rural America, you are much less likely to have high-speed Internet access than if you live in a city. If you live in a low-income neighborhood, you are less likely to have high-speed Internet access than if you live in a wealthier area.

To change that, we need massive investment to construct, expand, and improve wired and wireless networks. And to spur that investment, in turn, the FCC needs to remove outdated and unnecessary regulatory barriers.

That's why at my first open meeting as FCC Chairman, I announced the establishment of the BDAC. And since last March, you've been hard at work developing recommendations to the FCC about strategies to promote better, faster, and cheaper broadband. Indeed, you've been working so hard that it's going to take you two days, rather than the one typical for advisory committee meetings, to review and finalize many of these recommendations. And once you do that, we'll begin to take action on them.

A second reason why this one-year anniversary means something is that the BDAC reflects a core tenet of my policymaking approach: that the decisions we make inside this building must reflect input and fresh ideas from outside these walls. The telecom policy expertise that resides at the Commission is truly world-class. But the FCC doesn't have a monopoly on good ideas. Far from it.

That's why, ever since I joined the Commission in 2012, I've made it a priority to get out of Washington whenever possible to meet with innovators, entrepreneurs, state, local, and Tribal government officials, and consumers to learn first-hand from their experiences. During my first year as Chairman, I embarked on a Digital Divide Tour covering nearly 20 states, over 40 stops, and more than 4,000 miles in rental cars. I met with entrepreneurs like the founders of Rocket Fiber, including BDAC member Marc Hudson, who gave me a tutorial on the regulatory maze you need to navigate to launch a start-up broadband provider in Detroit. In Wisconsin, I visited TDS Telecom, represented on the BDAC by Bob DeBroux. There, I heard about how greater flexibility and accountability can give us more bang for our universal service buck.

And in years past, I've found myself in the bayou of Louisiana and the permafrost of Alaska and the mountains of West Virginia and the desert of Nevada and Tribal land in Arizona and small towns in Minnesota and Iowa and Kansas and South Dakota and Tennessee and so many more places I don't have time to mention or describe. I carry with me every day the places I've gone and the people I've met and the lessons I've learned.

But I will concede that it's a lot easier and it means less time away from my wife and young children when the experts come to us. So I really appreciate the work of the BDAC and its working groups, which have experts from Appalachia to Alaska and which have tackled so many important and challenging issues.

Let me close by thanking you all one more time for making my life a little easier and making the Commission's policies a lot smarter. Working together, we can help close the digital divide and extend digital opportunity to every American. And when we do, that rich legacy will be partly yours to claim.