



The Federal Communications Commission

Chairman Pai Leads

A Year of Action and Accomplishment

Bridging the Digital Divide



Promoting Innovation and Investment



Protecting Consumers and Enhancing Public Safety



Transparency and Process Reforms



Cutting and Modernizing Outdated Regulations



“My number one priority is closing the digital divide and bringing the benefits of the Internet age to all Americans.”
- Chairman Ajit Pai

Bridging the Digital Divide

“Since my first day as Chairman of the FCC, I’ve said repeatedly that my number one priority is closing the digital divide and bringing the benefits of the Internet age to all Americans.”

– FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

- **Mobility Fund Phase II**—Adopted new Mobility Fund Phase II [rules](#) providing up to \$4.53 billion in universal service support over ten years to bring 4G LTE to millions of unserved Americans. Established the [procedures](#) for a robust challenge process to ensure that the Commission targets support to primarily rural areas that lack unsubsidized 4G LTE service.
- **Connect America Fund Phase II**—Set key rules for a Connect America Fund competitive “[reverse auction](#)” that will provide nearly \$2 billion for rural fixed broadband deployment in unserved areas over the next decade.
- **Broadband in Rural New York State**—In the first item the Commission adopted under Chairman Pai’s tenure, the FCC voted to provide up to [\\$170 million](#) from the Connect America Fund to expand broadband deployment in unserved rural areas of New York State. This funding is coupled with at least \$200 million in state funding and private investment to jump-start broadband deployment and close the digital divide in these unserved areas more quickly.
- **Wireline Infrastructure Deployment**—[Launched](#) a proceeding to explore how to speed up the deployment of wired broadband infrastructure. Adopted an order to assist in the transition from legacy networks so providers can direct investments to building next-generation networks. Inquired whether regulations or contractual arrangements unnecessarily impede greater consumer choice and broadband deployment in apartment buildings, shopping malls, offices, or other multiple tenant environments.
- **Wireless Infrastructure Deployment**—Opened a [review](#) of how the Commission could act to remove or reduce the regulatory barriers to wireless network infrastructure investment. As part of this initiative, the FCC streamlined the historic review process for replacement [utility poles](#) to facilitate build out of next generation wireless infrastructure and sought input on a plan to exclude from routine historic preservation review the collocation of wireless communications equipment on certain towers known as [Twilight Towers](#).
- **Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee (BDAC)**—[Launched](#) an advisory committee to provide advice and recommendations to the Commission on how to accelerate the deployment of high-speed Internet access. The BDAC is considering how to accelerate the deployment of high-speed Internet access by reducing and removing regulatory barriers to infrastructure investment.
- **Connecting Low-Income Communities**—[Targeted](#) enhanced Lifeline funding in rural, tribal areas to promote facilities-based deployment. Increased low-income consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that prevented low-income consumers from switching Lifeline broadband providers in their first year. Also proposed additional ways to promote digital opportunity and choice for low-income Americans.
- **Rural Health Care Program**—Proposed increased funding for [telemedicine](#) connectivity in rural America as well as other reforms to ensure efficient spending of universal service funding.
- **Access for Broadband Satellite Constellations**—Approved requests by [OneWeb](#), [Space Norway](#), and [Telesat](#) to access the United States market to provide broadband services using satellite technology that holds promise to expand Internet access in remote and rural areas across the country. These approvals are the first of their kind for a new generation of large, non-geostationary-satellite orbit, fixed-satellite service systems, and the Commission continues to process other, similar requests.
- **Digital Divide Trips**—Chairman Pai visited over 20 states and traveled more than 4,000 road miles to get a firsthand look at the digital divide facing Americans in big cities and small towns. He met with local, state, and Tribal officials, entrepreneurs, and many others about ways to accelerate broadband deployment.

Promoting Innovation and Investment

“In the United States, we are in the process of returning to the light-touch approach to regulation that produced tremendous investment and innovation throughout our entire Internet ecosystem—from the core of our networks to providers at the edge.” – FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

- **Restoring Internet Freedom**—[Voted](#) to restore the longstanding, bipartisan light-touch regulatory framework that fostered rapid Internet growth, openness, and freedom for nearly 20 years. This action reversed the FCC’s 2015 imposition of heavy-handed Title II utility-style government regulation on Internet providers that discouraged investment in next-generation networks.
- **Free Consumer Data**—[Ended](#) a 2016 investigation into wireless carriers’ free-data offerings. These free-data plans have proven to be popular among consumers, particularly low-income Americans, and have enhanced competition in the wireless marketplace.
- **Next Gen TV**—[Adopted](#) proposal to allow broadcasters to use the Next Generation broadcast television transmission standard, also known as ATSC 3.0, on a voluntary, market-driven basis.
- **Business Data Services**—[Adopted](#) an order relieving unnecessary regulation in areas where business data services are delivered competitively in order to promote facilities-based investment.
- **Freeing Up Spectrum**—Expanded opportunities for next-generation wireless services in low-, mid-, and high-band spectrum, including:
 - **Spectrum Frontiers**—Made available 1,700 megahertz of additional spectrum above [24 GHz](#) to help ensure American leadership in 5G wireless services. This high-frequency spectrum will support innovative new uses enabled by fiber-fast wireless speeds and extremely low latency.
 - **Mid-Band Spectrum**—Initiated inquiry seeking comment on ways to expand opportunities for next-generation services, particularly wireless broadband, in mid-band spectrum, specifically [3.7-4.2 GHz](#), [5.925-6.425 GHz](#), and [6.425-7.125 GHz](#).
 - **600 MHz Forward Auction Winners**—Completed auction for new [600 MHz](#) licenses and granted first licenses from the auction.
 - **3.5 GHz Band**—Proposed revisions to rules in the [3.5 GHz](#) band to promote investment, keep up with technological advancements, and maintain U.S. leadership in the deployment of next-generation services.
- **Approving First LTE-U Devices**—Authorized the first-ever [LTE-for-unlicensed devices](#) in the 5 GHz band, a significant advance in wireless innovation. LTE-U allows wireless providers to deliver mobile data traffic using unlicensed spectrum while sharing the airwaves with Wi-Fi.
- **Approving Wireless Charging Tech**—[Approved](#) the first-ever wireless, “power-at-a-distance” charging technology. This technology could allow multiple devices to be recharged up to three feet away, regardless of manufacturer.
- **Vehicular Radar**—[Expanded](#) the spectrum available for vehicular radars that are used for a variety of purposes, including safety applications like collision avoidance and adaptive cruise control. Access to this additional spectrum will enable continued innovation in this space, allowing these radars to better distinguish between objects in areas close to the vehicle.
- **Supporting Experimentation**—[Launched](#) new experimental licensing website for program licenses for research centers and universities.
- **Facilitating Non-Geostationary Satellite Systems**—[Removed](#) regulatory obstacles for companies proposing to provide these services via large, non-geostationary-satellite orbit (NGSO), fixed-satellite service (FSS) satellite systems.
- **Investment in Cellular Band**—Adopted new rules to enable the deployment of high-speed mobile broadband services in the 800 MHz Cellular Band.

- **Equipment Authorization**—[Streamlined](#) and modernized the authorization requirements for most radiofrequency devices, such as cell phones or TV receivers that are imported, marketed, or operated within the United States.

Protecting Consumers

“The FCC is going to be an active cop on the beat when it comes to enforcing its rules and protecting consumers and competition.” – FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

- **Robocall and Spoofing Enforcement**—Focused Commission attention on #1 source of consumer complaints by taking strong enforcement actions against those who have violated anti-robocall and anti-spoofing laws.
 - Proposed a [\\$120 million fine for spoofing violations](#) against Florida-based time-share telemarketer. The subject allegedly made 96 million spoofed robocalls during a three-month period. The FCC claimed the telemarketing operation made the spoofed calls in order to trick unsuspecting consumers into answering and listening to his advertising messages. This is an apparent violation of the Truth in Caller ID Act.
 - Proposed an [\\$82 million spoofing fine against a health insurance telemarketer](#) which apparently made more than 21 million illegally spoofed robocalls in violation of the Truth in Caller ID Act. The FCC found that Best Insurance Contracts and its owner/operator allegedly displayed inaccurate caller ID information when making robocalls in an effort to sell health insurance, which especially targeted vulnerable consumers, including the elderly, the infirm, and low-income families.
- **Blocking Robocalls**—Adopted [rules](#) to protect consumers from unwanted robocalls, allowing phone companies to proactively block calls that appear to be from telephone numbers that do not or cannot make outgoing calls, without running afoul of the FCC’s call completion rules. For example, the rules allow phone companies to block calls purporting to be from invalid numbers, like those with area codes that don’t exist, from numbers that have not been assigned to a provider, and from numbers allocated to a provider but not currently in use.
- **Reliable Call Authentication**—[Explored](#) ways to set up a reliable system to verify that a phone call is really coming from the phone number that it claims to be. Many malicious robocallers hide their true originating phone number in order to evade call-blocking or filtering tools and trick consumers about a call’s true source. A reliable authentication system would help address this behavior and strengthen call-blocking.
- **Limiting Robocalls to Reassigned Numbers**—[Launched](#) a rulemaking process to address the issue of robocalls to reassigned phone numbers in order to reduce unwanted robocalls that consumers receive and provide clarity for responsible callers.
- **Cramming & Slamming**—Began a rulemaking process to prevent consumers from being [switched](#) to a different phone provider without their permission or having unauthorized charges added to their bills—activities known respectively as “slamming” and “cramming.”
 - **Cramming Fine**—Levied a [\\$1 million fine](#) against a Florida-based long-distance carrier for impersonating representatives of customers’ existing long-distance providers and illegally switching the customers’ long-distance carriers.
- **Hearing Aid Compatibility**—Made [improvements](#) to the ways that Americans with hearing loss can access wireline and wireless communications services, including adopting a revised volume control standard for wireline handsets to provide a more accurate measurement of voice amplification.
- **Rural Call Completion**—Took steps to combat the problem of long-distance calls failing to reach [rural communities](#). The FCC is seeking comment on rules that would hold phone

companies more accountable for ensuring that long-distance calls to rural America get through to a called party.

- **Nationwide Number Portability**—[Opened](#) a rulemaking promoting consumer choice by considering how to enable consumers and businesses to keep their current phone number regardless of which provider they want to use.
- **Rate Floor**—Stopped temporarily and proposed to eliminate entirely the Universal Service program’s “[rate floor](#),” which increased prices to rural telephone consumers by mandating the minimum rate high-cost carriers can charge for telephone service.
- **Video Relay Service Rules**—Adopted [new rules](#) to improve the quality and efficiency of video relay services used by individuals who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-disabled, including a “skills-based routing” trial.
- **Video Description**—[Increased](#) the amount of video described programming that each covered broadcast station or MVPD must provide for the benefit of blind and visually impaired viewers from 50 hours per calendar quarter to 87.5 hours.

Enhancing Public Safety

“Section 1 of the Communications Act charges the Commission with ‘promoting safety of life and property through the use of wire and radio communications.’ We’re committed to meeting that challenge by providing the communications tools needed to keep people safe in times of trouble.”

– FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

- **Hurricane Recovery**—Visited [Texas](#), [Florida](#), and [Puerto Rico](#) in the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria to assess damage firsthand from each storm, offer assistance, and meet with first responders and local officials. Coordinated directly with other agencies, such as FEMA and state and commonwealth regulatory bodies. The FCC released detailed communications status reports, outlining network outages and other important information, and posted up-to-date information on its website and social media accounts. Also formed a [Hurricane Recovery Task Force](#) to support the rebuilding of communications infrastructure and restoration of communications services.
- **Provided Nearly \$77 Million to Restore Communications Networks in Puerto Rico and USVI**—Provided [\\$76.9 million](#) in advance universal service funding to carriers as they helped to restore service in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **Project Loon Experimental License**—Granted 534 waivers and requests for Special Temporary Authority (STA) to help re-establish communications in hurricane-affected areas. One example is experimental licenses for [Project Loon](#), which in turn provided connectivity to 100,000 people in Puerto Rico.
- **E-Rate Order to Help Schools and Libraries**—Adopted an order to [aid hurricane-affected schools and libraries](#) through the FCC’s E-rate program. Provides targeted financial support to these institutions through the FCC’s E-rate program and give them maximum flexibility as they try to restore connectivity. Also makes available additional funds to schools that are serving a substantial number of students displaced by last season’s hurricanes.
- **Blue Alerts**—Added a new alert option—called a “[Blue Alert](#)”—to the nation’s emergency alerting systems to protect law enforcement officers and communities. Blue Alerts are used by state and local authorities to notify the public of threats to law enforcement and to help apprehend dangerous suspects.
- **Direct Dialing 911**—Commenced an [examination](#) of the 911 calling capabilities of enterprise communications systems, which serve many office buildings, educational campuses, and hotels. Noting reports that some of these systems may not support direct 911 dialing (that is, not requiring an access code like “9” to be dialed first), route 911 calls to the nearest 911 call center,

or transmit accurate information on the caller's location or call-back number, the Commission is seeking to identify the reasons why the 911 capabilities of these systems appear to be lagging.

- **Hawaii False Alert Investigation**—Immediately launched an [investigation](#) into the false missile alert that went out in Hawaii.
- **Contraband Phones in Prisons**—Adopted [new rules](#) to make it easier to combat contraband cellphones in prisons and sought public input on new technological solutions to address the problem.
- **AT&T 911 Outage**—Commenced investigation into AT&T 911 Outage where customers lost 911 service for five hours and issued a [final report](#) with recommendations.
- **Threatening Phone Calls**—Adopted rules to enable law enforcement and security personnel to obtain quick access to blocked [Caller ID](#) information needed to investigate threatening calls, which codifies a previous case-by-case process used to provide emergency relief to [Jewish Community Centers](#) subject to bomb threats.
- **Illegal Broadcasts Posing a Threat to Public Safety**—Proposed to fine an individual in New York \$400,000 for apparently operating a radio transmitter on frequencies licensed to the New York Police Department (NYPD), [causing interference](#) to NYPD's radio system.
- **Confronting Unlicensed Broadcasting**—Made pirate radio enforcement a priority. The Commission's Enforcement Bureau has taken [numerous](#) actions against alleged unauthorized broadcasters, including initiating more than 60 investigations of pirate operators throughout the country and issuing 119 notices of unauthorized operation. The FCC also voted to propose the maximum fine allowable by statute—\$144,344—against a [North Miami operator](#), including for the first time proposing to find the property owners liable.

Transparency and Process Reforms

"I want this Commission to be as open and accessible as possible to the American people.

I want us to do a better job of communicating with those we are here to serve."

– FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

- **Making Agenda Items Available to the Public Three Weeks Before Voting**—Reformed FCC processes to require the release of documents to the public [three weeks prior to being voted](#) on at open meetings. This is the first time in history Americans have been able to see these documents before the FCC takes action on them. Previously, these documents were not made available to the public until after the final vote.
- **Released Consumer-Friendly Policy Fact Sheets**—Following a suggestion from Commissioner Clyburn, the Chairman instituted a process to release a one-page [fact sheet](#) that summarizes in plain English each proposal in question to make it more accessible to the public.
- **Getting Things Done**—In the first 12 meetings under Chairman Pai's leadership, the FCC has adopted 78 agenda items in open meetings, more than double the number adopted by the Commission during the prior Chairman's first year.
- **Finding Consensus**—Chairman Pai has restored the collaborative and consensus-based tradition of FCC decision making. Under Chairman Pai, the Commission has voted nearly 80% of items on the monthly meeting agenda with bipartisan support and 68% without any dissent. Under his immediate predecessor, fewer than 50% of meeting items were adopted without any dissent.
- **Transparency Dashboard**—Launched an [online dashboard](#) to provide the public with more information on the agency's work, bringing to fruition a proposal the Chairman first introduced as a Commissioner in 2013. Available on the agency's website, [fcc.gov](#), this resource helps consumers access reports and graphics on FCC workloads, pending actions, and other accountability matrices, and more easily access Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) materials.

- **Office of Economics and Analytics**—[Unveiled](#) proposal to establish an Office of Economics and Analytics, which will more systematically incorporate economics and data analysis into the Commission’s policy work. “Now is the time to restore the place of economic analysis at the FCC,” the Chairman stated in a [speech](#) at the Hudson Institute.
- **Limited After-Vote Staff Edits**—Responding to concerns voiced by Commissioner O’Rielly about the process of granting editorial privileges to FCC staff following a Commission vote, Chairman Pai [reformed](#) the process so that editorial privileges granted to Bureaus and Offices will extend only to technical and conforming edits to items.
- **Empowered Commissioners**—Required any substantive [edits](#) made to an item between the time it is circulated and the meeting at which it is voted to be proposed by a Commissioner (rather than staff). This reform helps promote accountability and allow Commissioners to better understand where edits are coming from.
- **Accountability for Enforcement Settlements**—If Commissioners vote to propose and/or impose a forfeiture, the Enforcement Bureau should not settle that matter without their approval. Now any consent decree settling a Notice of Apparent Liability or Forfeiture Order issued by the full Commission must be approved by a vote of the [full Commission](#).
- **Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment**—[Launched](#) the Diversity Committee to provide advice and recommendations to the FCC on how to empower disadvantaged communities and accelerate the entry of small businesses, including those owned by women and minorities, into the media, digital news and information, and broadcast industries.

Cutting and Modernizing Outdated Regulations

“We want to make sure that our regulations match the realities of the modern marketplace.”

– FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

- **Media Ownership Regulations**—Updated the FCC’s broadcast ownership and attribution [rules](#) to reflect the current media marketplace. For example, the FCC eliminated the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership Rule that dates back to 1975 and has outlived its usefulness. As a result of eliminating or modernizing the FCC’s media rules, broadcast stations and local newspapers will be able to more easily invest in local news and content and improve service to their local communities for the benefit of consumers.
- **Modernization of Media Regulations Initiative**—Launched an [initiative](#) to modernize outdated or unnecessary media regulations. So far, the Commission has: proposed to eliminate rules requiring certain broadcast and cable entities to maintain paper copies of FCC rules; proposed to relieve certain television broadcasters of a reporting obligation relating to ancillary or supplementary services; sought comment on how to update rules requiring broadcasters to provide public notice of broadcast applications; proposed to eliminate or modernize the collection of cable data to reflect technological and industry changes; and proposed to allow cable operators to provide certain notices to subscribers electronically rather than on paper.
- **Main Studio Rule**—[Eliminated](#) an outdated rule, called the main studio rule, which required that each AM, FM, and television broadcast station maintain a main studio located in or near its community of license. Also eliminated the associated staffing and program origination capability requirements that applied to main studios. The FCC first adopted the main studio rule nearly 80 years ago before the rise of the Internet, which now easily allows listeners and viewers to provide input to broadcast stations.
- **Digital Cable Standards**—Modernized the FCC’s signal quality and signal leakage rules applicable to cable operators to reflect the industry’s transition to digital technology.
- **Revitalizing AM Radio**—Gave AM broadcasters greater flexibility in locating their FM fill-in translators, thereby enabling them to better serve their listeners. Also adopted rule changes

designed to ease the regulatory and financial burdens faced by AM broadcasters operating directional antenna systems.

- **Payphones**—Proposed eliminating the outdated requirement that carriers completing payphone calls conduct an annual audit of their payphone call tracking systems and file an associated annual audit report with the Commission.
- **Telegraphs**—Deleted all or part of eight different rules that had remained on our books even though the FCC determined years ago that they no longer apply. The order also scrapped references to the regulation of telegraph service given the evolution in technology in the decades since those rules were adopted and the last telegram in the United States was sent in 2006.
- **Improving Data, Reducing Paperwork**—Exploring ways to improve the quality, accuracy, and usefulness of the [data](#) the FCC collects on fixed and mobile voice and broadband service. Examining how the FCC can reduce burdens on industry by eliminating unnecessary or onerous data filing requirements.
- **Waived Burdensome Small Business Rules**—[Waived](#) for five years the enhanced Title II transparency reporting requirements for small businesses with no more than 250,000 subscribers. This helped the nation’s smallest and most competitive Internet service providers avoid becoming subject to unnecessary, onerous, and ill-defined reporting obligations.
- **Eliminated Outdated Public Inspection File Requirements**—Eliminated two outdated public inspection file [rules](#) that required broadcasters to retain, and make available to the public, copies of viewer and listener correspondence and required cable operators to maintain and allow public inspection of the location of a cable system’s principal headend.
- **Ended Unnecessary and Duplicative Bookkeeping Requirements**—Adopted rules streamlining various accounting requirements for certain wireline carriers and eliminated certain accounting requirements for large carriers. Specifically, the FCC eliminated the requirement that large carriers keep a separate set of regulatory accounting books in addition to their financial accounting books. Additionally, the Commission reduced the extent of FCC-specific accounts that must be maintained by all carriers.
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Rules**—Modernized our interpretation of our equal employment opportunity rules to account for the way that people actually look for jobs today, including on the Internet.
- **Better Rules for Non-Profit Broadcasters**—Relaxed third-party fundraising restrictions to permit many noncommercial television and radio stations to air limited fundraisers for the benefit of other non-profit organizations. Also, the FCC eased a reporting burden for volunteer board members of noncommercial educational broadcast stations.
- **Streamlined International Reporting**—Eliminated the annual Traffic and Revenue Reports and streamlined the Circuit Capacity Reports to reflect their diminished usefulness to the Commission in discharging its responsibilities today.
- **Streamlined Rules for Earth Stations in Motion**—[Proposed](#) to streamline, consolidate, and harmonize rules governing earth stations used to provide satellite-based services on ships, airplanes and vehicles. The action proposes additional flexibility for this fast-growing segment of the satellite communications market.
- **Streamlined Paperwork Requirements for Mobile Services**—[Harmonized](#) the Commission’s rules by eliminating the “commercial mobile radio service” presumption in order to be consistent with the FCC’s flexible-use approach to licensing.