



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

April 15, 2020

I hope that you, your family and colleagues are safe and well in these challenging times. I wanted to reach out to you in my capacity as a member of the USTTI Board of Directors to reinforce our commitment to stay connected with our partners around the world despite the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our ability to conduct training.

In the spirit of cooperation and sharing of best practices that is embodied in the USTTI curriculum, I also wanted to share with you information on what the U.S. Federal Communications Commission has been doing to ensure our communications networks remain strong and continue to support critical safety of life services and the connectivity needs of citizens, businesses, and governments.

As many of us around the world have experienced, the pandemic has had an impact on all aspects of our lives, from the way we are working, to the way our kids are getting educated, to how we are interacting with family and friends. Many of us—including me and almost all of the staff of the Federal Communications Commission—are now working from home. While we are conducting conference calls, our kids are in the next room completing class work remotely. Our social gatherings have now shifted to video chats. The challenges of “social distancing” have forced us to rely heavily on our communications technologies to stay connected with our loved ones, colleagues and classmates. This means that Internet access is proving to be one of the most valuable non-medical commodities during the pandemic.

Recognizing the critical role of communications networks during the pandemic, the FCC has taken several steps to ensure our infrastructure remains robust and that consumers get the access they need.

Our most important initiative has involved working with various industry stakeholders to make sure that nobody loses broadband and telephone services during this pandemic. The FCC also has cut through regulatory red tape and freed up resources to enable access to communications for those impacted by COVID-19. We have also encouraged broadcasters to keep the public adequately informed through public service announcements on how to respond to COVID-19. A complete list of the actions can be found at <https://www.fcc.gov/coronavirus>. To highlight just a few of the activities:

- I have called on broadband and telephone service providers to maintain connectivity for Americans experiencing disruptions caused by the coronavirus epidemic, asking them to take the

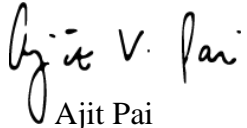
“Keep Americans Connected Pledge.” The Pledge involves three commitments: (1) not to terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic; (2) to waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and (3) to open Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them. The response from service providers across the nation has been resoundingly positive. More than 700 service providers have taken the Pledge.

- I have also challenged companies to go above and beyond the Pledge, urging them to expand existing or develop new low-income broadband programs, relax their data usage limits in appropriate circumstances, and take steps to promote remote learning and telehealth. Many companies that are taking additional steps are doing so at no extra cost to consumers.
- To promote telehealth solutions for the patients of rural hospitals and clinics, the Commission has made an additional \$42 million immediately available through the FCC’s Rural Health Care Program. The FCC also established a \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program to help health care providers provide connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations in response to the pandemic. This new initiative was proposed by the FCC to Congress and fully funded by Congress as part of the recently enacted COVID relief legislation.
- To help low-income consumers stay connected, the FCC has temporarily waived certain requirements of the Lifeline program, which helps lower income citizens gain more affordable access to communications services. This will ease burdens on Lifeline subscribers and allow Lifeline carriers to focus their efforts on assisting customers. The FCC also examined a number of programs to connect schools and individuals who are deaf or have a speech disability and relaxed the rules to help extend service to more people during this pandemic.
- The FCC has granted Special Temporary Authority to numerous providers of both fixed and mobile wireless service in all parts of the country to access additional spectrum to augment their capacity. We have also temporarily waived certain technical rules to enable service providers to meet increased customer demand for broadband during the coronavirus pandemic. These actions help consumers participate in telehealth, distance learning, and telework, and simply remain connected while practicing recommended social distancing.
- To keep Americans informed about the latest COVID-19 scams, the FCC is doing much consumer outreach: For instance, we have provided tips to consumers to help them optimize their home networks and avoid coronavirus-related robocalls during the pandemic and have promoted the effectiveness of Wireless Emergency Alerts in order to make such messages more accessible.

Every country faces unique challenges, of course, but it is my hope that in our common goal of addressing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, we can share perspectives to enable people around the world to stay connected. I’m pleased to have this chance to share what we’ve done to address this emergency. And I’m likewise interested in hearing from you on the specific measures you are taking. To this end, please feel free to contact the Chief of the International Bureau, Thomas Sullivan Thomas.Sullivan@fcc.gov, if there is information you would like to share.

These are certainly challenging times. However, by collaborating and staying connected (all from a proper social distance), we can and will get through this—together. And when we do, I can assure you that I, the FCC, and the entire USTTI family look forward to welcoming you for USTTI training. My best to you and your families, and stay safe.

With my warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ajit Pai
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission