

## STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI

Re: *Revitalization of the AM Radio Service*, MB Docket No. 13-249.

This is a great day.

It's been over two decades since we last comprehensively reviewed our AM radio rules. Over that time, the AM band has struggled. Interference problems, declining listenership, and other factors have brought the band low. But millions of Americans—myself included—still rely on and believe in AM radio. So last September, I proposed that the FCC launch an AM radio revitalization initiative.<sup>1</sup>

Today, we are doing just that. This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) kicks off a landmark effort by the Commission to energize the nation's oldest broadcasting service, and I am excited to support it.

The NPRM embraces a sensible two-stage strategy for improving AM radio service. *First*, we propose several ways to give AM broadcasters relief in the short term. For instance, we suggest eliminating the ratchet rule. We tee up modifications to the daytime and nighttime community coverage rules for existing AM stations. Perhaps most importantly, we seek public input on letting AM stations apply for new FM translators. I'm the first to acknowledge that these and other proposals will not be an immediate panacea for the difficulties confronting the AM band. But based on the conversations I have had with AM broadcasters across the country during the past year, I am convinced that they can make a substantial, positive difference to numerous AM stations.

*Second*, we also invite the American public to share their proposals for the long-term future of the AM band. What steps can the Commission take so that there will be a vibrant AM radio service ten or fifteen years from now? I hope broadcasters, engineers, and anyone else with an interest in AM radio will submit creative ideas to the Commission.

Many outside and inside the Commission paved the way for today's accomplishment. Over the past year, AM broadcasters and listeners across the country have expressed their support for this effort in many different ways.<sup>2</sup> The Minority Media and Telecommunications Council has pressed us for a long time to reform our AM radio rules; they know that most minority-owned radio stations are on the AM band and that many AM stations serve ethnic and foreign-language populations. Benjamin Tarbell, my one-time clerk and then-student at George Washington University Law School, wrote the first draft of this item. Chairwoman Clyburn's leadership resulted in the circulation of this item. And this Notice would not have seen the light of day without the hard work of the staff in the Media Bureau's Audio Division, led by Division Chief Peter Doyle and Deputy Chief Jim Bradshaw. I thank everyone who has helped shepherd this document from conception to adoption and look forward to continuing to collaborate with them in the time to come.

And now, the fun begins. Let's get to work revitalizing AM radio.

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<sup>1</sup> Remarks of Commissioner Ajit Pai Before the Radio Show (Sept. 19, 2012), *available at* <http://go.usa.gov/WTD4>.

<sup>2</sup> *See, e.g.*, Statement of Commissioner Ajit Pai on WRDN, Reel Country 1430 AM (June 10, 2013), *available at* <http://go.usa.gov/Wb5e>. I want to express my personal gratitude to the many, many radio broadcasters—too numerous to list here, but ranging from Washington, DC to Alaska—who have hosted me in their stations; conducted on-air interviews in person or over the phone; written me emails, letters, and cards; and/or simply given me the proverbial, and sometimes literal, pat on the back for advocating a cause they had assumed had been forgotten.