

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Elimination of Main Studio Rule*, MB Docket No. 17-106.

The first commercial radio broadcast in the United States took place in Pittsburgh on November 2, 1920. That night, KDKA reported the results of the presidential election between Warren Harding and James Cox. The studio used for that broadcast was a tiny, makeshift wooden shack on top of the Westinghouse Company's plant in East Pittsburgh.

Broadcast studios have changed a lot over the last 90-plus years—including KDKA's, which I've had the privilege to visit. And so too have the purposes that a studio serves. That brings us to the FCC's main studio rule.

The FCC first conceived the main studio rule almost 80 years ago. The rule requires each AM, FM, and television broadcast station to maintain a main studio located in or near its community of license. Back then, perhaps, this made sense. Local access to a station's main studio enabled the local public to provide input, and it allowed stations to participate in community activities. But today, the rule appears outdated, unnecessary, and unduly burdensome. Community access and engagement remain important in the digital era, but technology has rendered physical studios unnecessary for those purposes. That's because such activities are much more likely to occur via social media, email, or phone rather than through an in-person visit to a broadcast studio.

Furthermore, broadcasters have shown that the main studio rule is a continuous cost that keeps them from serving their local communities in meaningful ways, like broadcasting additional local programming. Recently, a broadcaster in Minnesota wrote to me saying that the "archaic" rule has "outlived [its] usefulness." He added that he'd like to build out his construction permit for an AM station in a nearby town, but that the "Main Studio Rule is a killer; the cost to maintain a staff—it would make the construction of this facility a ticket of doom." Unfortunately, despite his belief that he'd be able to air meaningful local content without a main studio, it appears that the cost of complying with the rule may make it hard for him to extend service to that nearby community.

The proceeding we begin today could grant this broadcaster and all others affected by this rule the flexibility to use their limited resources in a way that best serves their communities.

Today's *Notice* is an important step towards bringing the FCC's media rules into the digital age. And for that, we have Michelle Carey, Martha Heller, Holly Saurer, and Diana Sokolow from the Media Bureau to thank. We will continue to rely on your expertise as we move forward with modernizing many more media rules to reflect today's marketplace.