



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 10, 2018

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

The Honorable John Tester
United States Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

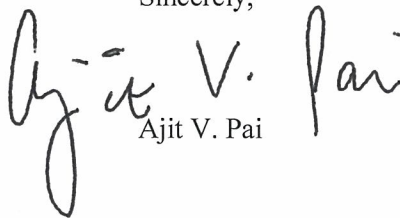
Dear Senator Tester:

Thank you for your letter regarding the E-Rate program. I believe an effective E-Rate program—one that promotes better connectivity for students and library patrons alike—can be a powerful tool to help bridge the digital divide. I am happy to hear that through E-Rate, school districts and telecommunications carriers in Montana are making tremendous progress in delivering high-speed broadband to schools in rural America. That's exactly the type of progress that rural Americans need and deserve if we are going to close the digital divide.

I also agree that bureaucratic red tape should not stand in the way of high-speed Internet being delivered to rural classrooms. Unfortunately, there have been serious flaws in the administration of the E-Rate program. That's why I have asked the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), which implements this program on the FCC's behalf, to improve administration of E-Rate so that schools and libraries in need do not get trapped by unnecessary technicalities. Much of USAC's work over this past year has focused on addressing critical IT issues and bringing the E-Rate Productivity Center portal—created at the direction of the FCC all the way back in 2014—up to par. As a result, for Funding Year 2017, USAC issued funding commitments and disbursements at a faster pace than the previous year. I expect additional improvements to other aspects of E-Rate administration this year to make it easier for schools and libraries to apply for and receive funding without enduring unnecessary delays or denials.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part.
Ajit V. Pai



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The Honorable Steve Bullock
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock:

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Ajit V. Pai