

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2020

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause unprecedented disruption to the health of our fellow citizens and our nation's economy. While Congress has moved swiftly in a bipartisan manner to pass a series of bills that bolster our public health infrastructure and support struggling businesses and workers, more must be done to protect the fragile state of our economy. One key step that can be taken by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is to halt any increases to annual regulatory fees due in 2020 for broadcast licensees. This action does not require an act of Congress and would have a meaningful impact on radio and television broadcasters that have been economically harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Radio and television broadcasters are critical components of the nation's COVID-19 response, informing and educating communities to help keep people safe. In addition to around-the-clock news coverage that keeps the public apprised of ever-changing government recommendations and developments within their communities, broadcasters have donated a tremendous amount of airtime – worth more than \$132 million – to public service announcements aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 and sharing messages of hope.

Local broadcasters rely on advertising revenue to fund their operations and provide critical local news and emergency updates. As small businesses have shuttered their doors in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, this ad revenue from local restaurants, car dealers, and retail stores, among others has taken a significant hit. It is anticipated that this trend will only worsen with some estimates showing a 44 percent decline in all advertising, and a \$14 billion decline in broadcast television and radio for 2020.

Given the uncertainty of when state and local economies will fully reopen and how consumer behavior will be impacted, it is nearly impossible for broadcasters to predict when, or if, operating revenues may return to normal. What is certain for these broadcasters is that expenses will continue to be incurred for the duration of the year. One such expense for thousands of entities is the annual FCC regulatory fee that will need to be paid in September, prior to the end of the fiscal year. Given the likelihood that emergency declarations will still be in place beyond such time, we further ask that you immediately notify Congress of any statutory change necessary to allow payment of regulatory fees after September 30, 2020.

The FCC can take meaningful, positive action by halting the increase in regulatory fees on local broadcasters who continue to support and inform their communities during this challenging time. Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to working together to support this critical industry as Americans navigate their way through this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann McLane Kuster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Stewart
Member of Congress