



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
455 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

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NCAI HEADQUARTERS
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Re: In Support of COVID-19 Adjustment to FCC Timelines Governing Tribal Priority Filing Windows

Dear Chairman Pai:

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest and largest national organization composed of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations, we write in support of the Congressional Native American Caucus’s April 9, 2020, letter requesting that the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) extend the tribal priority filing window for the 2.5GHz band over tribal lands to close on January 27, 2021 and extend the start of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (Auction 904) by 180 days.

Like all governments across the United States, tribal nations are working diligently to immediately respond to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, the urgency, infection rate, and death toll of COVID-19 continue to increase. American Indian and Alaska Native communities are disproportionately impacted by the health conditions that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes increase risk for a more serious COVID-19 illness, including respiratory illnesses, diabetes, and other health conditions. As a result, tribal nations are currently providing essential services to their communities and dedicating resources to the unique circumstances of COVID-19 response that would otherwise be used on opportunities like the 2.5GHz tribal priority filing window and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. Consequently, an extension of the tribal priority filing window and the start of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund is essential.

NCAI thanks the Commission for these historic opportunities for tribal nations to bridge the digital divide in Indian Country. We urge the Commission to account for the widespread impacts of COVID-19 in tribal communities by extending the end date for the tribal priority window and the start date for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. Thank you for your consideration and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Tyler Scribner, Policy Analyst, at tscribner@NCAI.org.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Allis
Chief Executive Officer
National Congress of American Indians