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For Immediate Release

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONERS AJIT PAI AND MICHAEL O’RIELLY
On Protecting Noncommercial Educational Broadcasters from Needless Regulation

WASHINGTON, January 4, 2017.—We strongly object to the Media Bureau’s decision today to resolve the petitions for reconsideration of the Commission’s decision last year to impose unnecessary reporting requirements on noncommercial educational (NCE) television stations. The Commission’s ruling no longer enjoys the support of the majority of Commissioners—nor is there a majority that supports today’s Media Bureau decision—so it was wrong for the Bureau to bypass Commissioners and reaffirm these reporting requirements unilaterally. And making matters worse, the Bureau gave no notice to Commissioners of its decision, leaving our offices to find out about its order from the press. This basic lack of comity is unacceptable in any situation, but is especially unfortunate during a transition between Administrations. Procedurally, it’s just another example showing why the Commission’s use of delegated authority needs to be fixed.

The good news is that today’s decision need not be the final word. We encourage public broadcasters to file an application for review so that the newly constituted Commission will have an opportunity to revisit this matter. It is pointless to require board members of NCE stations to report sensitive personal information (like the last four digits of individual Social Security numbers) to the Commission and will only serve to discourage these volunteers from serving their communities. This is why public broadcasters from at least two-thirds of the states have sought relief from the Commission. We hope that we will be in a position to respond to their call soon.

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