

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

Serious concerns have been raised about whether you are executing your leadership of the FCC free from influences that compromise your objectivity and impartiality.

In particular, we have strong concerns that the FCC's ongoing review of the proposed merger of Sinclair Broadcasting (Sinclair) and Tribune Media (Tribune) may be tainted by a series of actions and events that raise questions about the independence and impartiality of the FCC.

As a result, under separate cover today, we are asking the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Office of Inspector General (OIG) to commence an impartial and independent investigation into whether your actions have undermined your and the agency's independence.¹

Accordingly, it is imperative you recuse yourself from certain matters in order to protect the public interest, integrity and independence of the agency's decision-making process until after the FCC's inspector general determines whether the facts warrant your permanent recusal.

Specifically, the facts outlined in our letter to the Inspector General dictate that you recuse yourself from voting on the following proposed items scheduled for a vote on November 16, which are directly related to our questions about whether your decisions reflect a lack of independence or impartiality favoring Sinclair:

(1) The *Order on Reconsideration and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* related to the 2014 Quadrennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (MB Docket No. 14-50); 2010 Quadrennial Regulatory Review -- Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (MB Docket No. 09-182); Promoting Diversification of Ownership In the Broadcasting Services (MB Docket No. 07-294); Rules and Policies Concerning Attribution of Joint Sales Agreements in Local Television Markets (MB Docket No. 04-256); Rules and Policies to

¹ We would note that the FCC Office of Inspector General has received a similar request from Representatives Pallone and Cummings.

Promote New Entry and Ownership Diversity in the Broadcasting Services (MB Docket No. 17-289).

(2) The *Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* related to Authorizing Permissive Use of the "Next Generation" Broadcast Television Standard (GN Docket No. 16-142).

In addition, we are requesting the FCC immediately halt its work on the proposed merger between Sinclair and Tribune Media until the Inspector General completes his investigation.

Attached to this letter is a copy of the letter sent to the Inspector General documenting our concerns in detail. We expect the Inspector General to fully and fairly investigate the concerns raised in our letter, and for your office to fully cooperate with that investigation.

Please confirm to our offices as soon as possible that you have complied with these requests.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



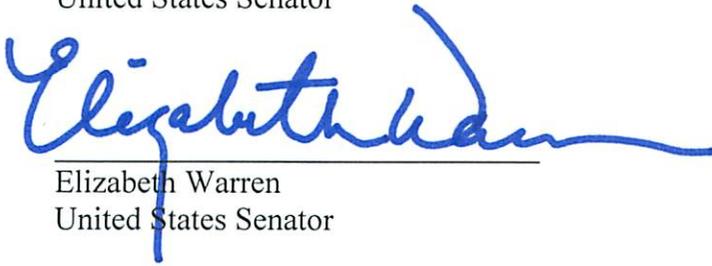
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



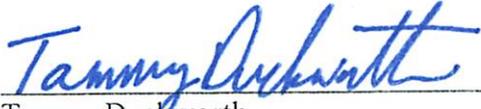
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



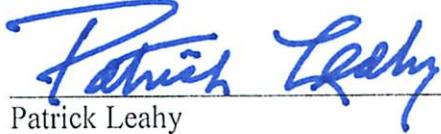
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

cc: Inspector General David L. Hunt