

The Virgin Islands Consortium

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai Visits USVI And Puerto Rico This Week

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The chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Ajit Pai, will be visiting the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico this week -- beginning today through Saturday, the FCC has made known.

Mr. Pai's visit to the U.S. territories comes on the heels of an FCC proposal [to spend almost \\$1 billion](#) to restore the USVI's and Puerto Rico's telecoms, after they were damaged and in some instances destroyed by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"The people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are still recovering from last year's devastating storms. That means the FCC's work is far from over," Mr. Pai said when

announcing the proposal. "After my previous visit to Puerto Rico, I publicly committed to 'thinking creatively and doing proactively to help restore networks on the island.' The plan I've proposed today would deliver on that commitment and extend that vision even further."

Mr. Pai, who was appointed by President Donald Trump to lead the FCC, is best known for his efforts to repeal net neutrality rules put in place during the Obama administration. Those regulations prohibited broadband providers from blocking websites or charging for higher-quality service or certain content. The federal government will also no longer regulate high-speed internet delivery as if it were a utility, like phone service.

Mr. Pai has been a strong advocate for the swift adoption of 5G, shorthand for fifth-generation wireless technology, which essentially brings ultrafast wireless speeds to people. The new technology sends billions of bits of data per second, up from peaks of hundreds of millions today, and could cut the time to download a movie to seconds. Other 5G features would allow autonomous cars and industrial equipment to reliably exchange short bursts of data at dazzling speed.

Mr. Pai and other FCC Republican chairmen have strongly encouraged weakening regulations to accelerate the deployment of new 5G technology. According to The New York Times, last week another Republican F.C.C. commissioner, Brendan Carr, announced details of a plan to streamline the environmental and historic review process for 5G infrastructure, saying it could cut costs by 80 percent. The FCC plans to vote on the measure this month.

As for his visit to the territories, Mr. Pai will lead a team to review recovery efforts, evaluate lessons learned from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and prepare for the upcoming hurricane season, the FCC said. "It's important to learn what has worked well and what could be done better — and to apply those lessons to future storms," Mr. Pai said.