

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Net Neutrality Dies On June 11

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Ernice Gilbert **May 21, 2018**



Almost three years to the day when it was made law by the Federal Communications Commission (F.C.C.) under the Obama administration, net neutrality will die on June 11.

In [recently issued release](#) from the office of FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, Mr. Pai reiterated his stance that the internet was never broken and expressed discontent with Title II rules as being "outdated" and "heavy handed."

"On June 11th, we will have a framework in place that encourages innovation and investment in our nation's networks so that all Americans, no matter where they live, can have access to better, cheaper and faster internet access and the jobs, opportunities and platform for free expression that it provides," reads the release.

Mr. Pai, who was appointed by President Donald Trump to lead the F.C.C., is best known for his efforts to dismantle the net neutrality rules. 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.

It is not clear how the demise of net neutrality will affect the territory. The biggest communications firms in the USVI -- Viya and Broadband VI -- have not expressed their position on the matter, but their actions will be looked at closely as the June 11 date approaches, as well as moves made thereafter.

Mr. Pai recently visited the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, which coincided [with 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 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, in late April 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.