

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Mitigation of Orbital Debris in the New Space Age*, IB Docket No. 18-313; *Mitigation of Orbital Debris*, IB Docket No. 02-54 (Terminated)

You probably thought that I'd start off this statement by discussing a certain movie set in space starring Sandra Bullock and George Clooney. But instead, I'd like to turn your attention to *Return of the Jedi*. At the end of the movie, after rogue pilots from the Rebel Alliance blow up the "fully operational" Death Star, Princess Leia, Han Solo, and Luke Skywalker celebrate on Endor with the Ewoks. But in the midst of this party, the film leaves a vital question unanswered. What will be done to address the threat posed by all that space debris? The Alliance apparently had no plan to mitigate it, and whatever rules the Empire may have had evaporated with the Empire itself.

Space debris, after all, can be a very serious problem. In space, a very small piece of orbital debris can cause catastrophic damage. It's been over a decade since we last reviewed our orbital debris rules, and in that time, the number of satellites in use has increased dramatically. That's why last year I asked staff to begin looking at ways for the Commission to take up this important topic once again. And now, we're proposing new rules and disclosures to mitigate the threat posed by orbital debris. Indeed, we're exploring six ways to address this problem, including changes in satellite design, better disposal procedures, and active collision avoidance. I look forward to reviewing the feedback on these proposals and then doing our part to keep the final frontier safe for new and innovative uses.

However, I am disappointed that one of my colleagues has chosen to criticize this item even though we accepted every edit she requested. It is difficult to accommodate concerns if they are not voiced until the time of the vote.

Thank you to staff who worked on this important item: Jose Albuquerque, Christopher Bair, Clay DeCell, Stephen Duall, Jennifer Gilsean, Karl Kensinger, Julia Malette, Sankar Persaud, Walt Strack, Tom Sullivan, Troy Tanner, and Merissa Velez from the International Bureau; Michael Ha, Nick Oros, Jamison Prime, Ron Repasi, and Walter Johnston from the Office of Engineering and Technology; Scot Stone from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; and Deborah Broderson, David Horowitz, and Bill Richardson from the Office of General Counsel.