

COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES

JUDICIARY

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

702 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

(202) 224-2823
FAX: (202) 224-9673

90 STATE HOUSE SQUARE, TENTH FLOOR
HARTFORD, CT 06103

(860) 258-6940
FAX: (860) 258-6958

<http://blumenthal.senate.gov>

October 16, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

On Wednesday morning, the President of the United States threatened to revoke a broadcaster's license because he disagreed with the content of that station's speech.¹ This is an affront to the First Amendment, freedom of the press, and founding principles of the Communications Act. A robust, free press is the cornerstone of our democracy – ensuring public access to news without governmental meddling or censorship.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), created by Congress in 1934, has a long and proud history of independence. I write today to ask you to honor that independence and demonstrate that America's institutions cannot be bullied into abandoning our core values. I ask you to commit in writing that you will not vote against any broadcast license renewal application in a manner that is inconsistent with the First Amendment.

I am sure you can appreciate what kind of chilling effect a threat like this issued from the oval office might have on newsrooms – and especially on small and independent stations. As FCC Chairman, sworn to uphold both the Constitution and the Communications Act, you have a duty to condemn this attack and reassure our nation and our journalists that you will stand up for them and protect and defend their fundamental freedoms.

The President's tweets were alarming in both his disregard of the FCC's independence and flagrant disrespect for freedom of the press. I ask for your unwavering commitment that you will ensure the First Amendment remains a cornerstone of our democracy and that you will not follow through on this direction from the President. I respectfully request a written statement from you regarding your position on this matter no later than November 1, 2017. A similar letter has been sent to your colleagues.

¹ On Wednesday, October 11 at 9:55 AM, President Trump tweeted, "With all of the Fake News coming out of NBC and the Networks, at what point is it appropriate to challenge their License? Bad for country!" (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918112884630093825>). President Trump followed up on that tweet in the evening at 8:09 PM, "Network news has become so partisan, distorted and fake that licenses must be challenged and, if appropriate, revoked. Not fair to public!" (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918267396493922304>).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Blumenthal" clearly legible.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate