

## AJIT PAI APPOINTED NEW FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2017

On January 23, 2017, President Trump designated Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) commissioner Ajit Pai to be the new FCC Chairman. Pai, a Republican commissioner appointed by President Obama in 2012, replaces former FCC Chairman and Democrat Tom Wheeler, who stepped down on January 20, 2017. Traditionally, the FCC numbers three commissioners from the political party occupying the White House, and two from the other party.

Pai, a telecommunications lawyer, Verizon Communications in-house counsel, and FCC and Department of Justice (“DoJ”) counsel prior to joining the FCC as commissioner, is an avowed deregulatory critic of prior FCC actions. Among policies he is likely to favor are the dismantling of the FCC’s “Net Neutrality” Title II rules promulgated during Wheeler’s tenure (enshrining Net Neutrality as a Communications Act/Telecommunications Act Title II service regulated as a telecommunications common carrier) and a more permissive attitude towards media concentration, consumer and data privacy concerns, and telecommunications and media merger and acquisition (“M&A”) activity on which the FCC has concurrent review authority with the DoJ.

For further information on Net Neutrality, FCC media concentration rules, data and consumer privacy rules, and M&A review jurisdiction, please see Kurtin PLLC’s “U.S. Communications Law and Transactions (Winter 2010)” white paper, to be updated this year and available at [www.kurtinlaw.com](http://www.kurtinlaw.com) or linked to this advisory on [www.jdsupra.com](http://www.jdsupra.com).

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