

# House Democrats tell Ajit Pai: Stop screwing over the public

Enlarge / FCC Chairman Ajit Pai speaks during an FCC oversight hearing held by the Senate Commerce Committee on Thursday, August 16, 2018.

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Democratic lawmakers have put Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai on notice that he can expect a lot more scrutiny now that Democrats control the US House of Representatives.

The House Commerce Committee is “reassuming its traditional role of oversight to ensure the agency is acting in the best interest of the public and consistent with its legislative authority,” Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-N.J.) and Communications and Technology Subcommittee Chairman Mike Doyle (D-Penn.) said in an announcement yesterday.

Pallone, Jr. and Doyle wrote a letter to Pai, saying that he has made the FCC too secretive and has repeatedly advanced the interests of corporations over consumers.

They wrote:

*Not only have you have failed on numerous occasions to provide Democratic members of this committee with responses*

*to their inquiries, you have also repeatedly denied or delayed responding to legitimate information requests from the public about agency operations. These actions have denied the public of a full and fair understanding of how the FCC under your leadership has arrived at public policy decisions that impact Americans every day in communities across the country.*

*Under your leadership, the FCC has failed repeatedly to act in the public interest and placed the interest of corporations over consumers. The FCC should be working to advance the goals of public safety, consumer protection, affordable access, and connectivity across the United States. To that end, it is incumbent upon the Committee's leadership and its members to oversee the activities of the FCC.*

## **Dems seek update on consumer complaints**

Pallone, Jr. and Doyle asked Pai to update the Commerce Committee on its workload and on “the FCC’s interactions with the public through its handling of consumer complaints and Freedom of Information Act requests.” Pai’s FCC has repeatedly stalled in responding to public records requests or failed to provide any substantive response at all.

The Pallone, Jr. and Doyle letter goes on to ask a series of specific questions. For example, the letter asks for extensive data about consumer complaints and public records requests the FCC has received during Pai’s tenure and information about the FCC’s responses to those complaints and records requests.

Pallone, Jr. and Doyle requested a written response from Pai by March 4. We contacted Pai’s office about the letter today and will update this story if we get a response.

On Thursday this week, the Communications Subcommittee will

hold a hearing about the impact of Pai's net neutrality repeal on consumers, small businesses, and free speech. Witnesses who have been invited to testify at the hearing include former FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, cable industry chief lobbyist Michael Powell (who is also a former FCC chairman), and representatives of Mozilla, Free Press, and Eastern Oregon Telecom.

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