

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE**

Re: Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; Internet-based Captioned Telephone Service, CG Docket No. 03-123.

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, entrusting the Commission to ensure that individuals with disabilities have functionally equivalent access to telecommunications as any other individual. Today, we recognize Internet protocol (IP)-captioned telephone, like analog interstate captioned telephone service, deserves to be supported by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) fund. Recently, I had the opportunity to witness how IP captioned telephone works – allowing the listener to hear and *read* what the person with whom they are speaking is saying. As I participated in this demonstration, I thought about a dear friend of mine who was recently diagnosed with an acute case of presbycusis – the loss of hearing that occurs in most individuals as they grow older. Unfortunately, he decided to close his legal practice as a result of his hearing loss. I couldn't help but think about how wonderful a service like this would be for my friend and the many others out there like him – enabling him to continue to use the telephone system like all other Americans and, perhaps, even for him to be able to continue the work he loved. Moreover, today, we address the IP version of this service, which does not require specialized equipment, allowing a person to converse on the phone, while reading the conversation on their desktop computer, for instance, giving the user all of the customization, such as adjusting the font size, inherent in computing. The addition of this service helps advance the goal of achieving functionally equivalent communications service for persons with disabilities. Accordingly, I am pleased to support today's item. Finally, I'd like to thank the Bureau for its hard work in finalizing today's Order.