

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, CG Docket No. 03-123.

The services supported by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund provide vital connections for millions of Americans with hearing and speech disabilities. As communications technologies continue to play a greater role in all of our lives, relay services are an increasingly important tool. They help the disability community harness the power of our rapidly-evolving communications networks and, more broadly, they help us as a nation to take advantage of our collective strength.

Even as use of revolutionary technologies like Video Relay Service (VRS), Internet Protocol (IP) Relay, and IP Captioned Telephone Service has surged, the Commission's compensation rate-setting process for our relay services has presented a variety of open questions and controversy among providers and consumers. The message was clear from providers and consumers alike that the Commission needed to improve its administration of the Fund and to increase awareness of these critical services, so I am pleased that we tackle these issues in earnest here.

I commend the Chairman, my colleagues, and the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau for their collective efforts to improve our management of the fund through this Order. The changes adopted here are supported by both consumers and providers, and should provide a more reasonable, transparent, and predictable process in future years. I am also pleased that we provide specific compensation for outreach regarding emerging services, like Speech-to-Speech relay services, in this Order. Finally, I am also pleased that we affirm our commitment to the TRS Advisory Council, and that we enlist the Council's assistance in monitoring and reviewing the new methodologies implemented here.

We must always be mindful of the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) requirement that telecommunications services for those with hearing and speech disabilities be "functionally equivalent" to those services provided to hearing individuals, which serves as a continuing challenge for us to improve the program. I look forward to working with my colleagues, our CGB staff, members of the TRS Advisory Council, and the many members of the disabilities community on these issues as we move forward.