

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, CG Docket No. 03-123, CC Docket No. 98-67; *E911 Requirements for IP-Enabled Service Providers*, WC Docket No. 05-196

Six months ago the Commission required by the end of the year that deaf and hard of hearing consumers who use Internet-based Telecommunications Relay Service would be able to receive and use a standard ten-digit telephone number and that emergency calls placed by these consumers would be automatically directed to providers of emergency assistance. It took a great deal of work in a short amount of time to make this a reality. I am pleased to support today's item because it addresses several issues critical to ensuring a successful transition to the ten-digit numbering system by December 31. In doing so, deaf and hard of hearing Internet-based TRS users will be able to get a phone number and provide it to friends, employers, their doctors and teachers, and the like, so they can be connected in ways that hearing consumers take for granted today.

The Order addresses important 911 implementation issues, certain user registration processes, requires transparent education and outreach efforts, and makes clear that consumers who choose to change their provider should continue to receive essential phone services, including point-to-point calling between VRS users. The Commission must be vigilant in addressing issues that may arise during the transition, including concerns that were raised regarding the portability of devices, promoting equipment competition, and consumer choices. Even as the Commission takes these important and necessary steps, we must remain mindful that deaf and hard of hearing consumers should be receiving the appropriate services at a reasonable cost to the TRS fund. I look forward to working with the Commission as it takes whatever steps necessary to oversee the administration of the program and to promote functional equivalency for the deaf and hard of hearing users of the program.