

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

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

A 911 call may be the most important call you'll ever make. When most people place such a call, 911 operators immediately know where they are calling from based on their phone number. But imagine if the operator didn't know because you don't have a phone number and because you're not calling from a traditional phone line. Imagine the additional time it would take to determine where to send emergency services or worse, imagine if the operator refused to take your call at all. The deaf and hard of hearing don't need to imagine these situations because they have faced these scary scenarios when relying upon Internet-based Telecommunications Relay Services such as Video Relay Service, Internet Protocol Relay and IP-captioned telephone relay service to communicate.

The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates functional equivalency and it is astonishing that in 2008 some people with disabilities don't have the equivalent of something as basic as 911 service or, for that matter, a home phone number. I am pleased to support this item because it requires providers to accept and prioritize all 911 calls from consumers using Internet relay services. It also establishes a concrete timeline for implementing a ten-digit numbering plan for consumers. In doing so, we take another step towards providing the deaf and hard of hearing the functionally equivalent phone services they need and deserve.

I want to thank all my colleagues for their willingness to commit the Commission to a timeline for getting the job done. Specifically, the Commission has committed to completing a final Order on ten-digit numbering rules by the end of June. In order to provide all stakeholders the time necessary to implement these rules, the Commission will require that the plan be implemented no later than year-end. In doing so, consumers who use Internet relay services will have conveniences and life-saving services available to them for the first time. To succeed in this, it will require all interested parties – consumers, providers and the Commission – pulling together to make this happen. I am optimistic that with everyone's focus, effort and assistance we can get it done and I look forward to helping bring it all home.