

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

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.

Today we take a significant step in furtherance of the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) powerful mandate that telecommunications services for those with hearing and speech disabilities be "functionally equivalent" to those services provided to hearing individuals. A hallmark of a functionally equivalent service must be the ability to access emergency services. Indeed, the ability to reach public safety officials via "911" has had a remarkably beneficial impact on American consumers. So I'm pleased that this Order takes a much-needed first step toward ensuring that millions of consumers with speech and hearing disabilities will be able to access emergency services when using innovative Internet-based forms of TRS.

By requiring providers of Internet-based TRS to accept emergency calls and to deliver them to the appropriate public safety answering point, this Order helps extend the benefits of our E911 networks to the growing community of relay service users. Users of Internet relay services aptly described emergency access as "unequivocally the most important aspect of VRS and IP Relay functional equivalency."¹ Leading members of Congress have recognized the importance of this issue and asked us to move quickly.²

Although the E911 solution adopted here is interim in nature, the Order includes an important commitment to adopt a permanent and automated emergency access solution. Notably, the Order also sets forth a commitment to adopt a ten-digit dialing plan, which would greatly facilitate communication with and among users of Internet-based forms of TRS. Addressing both of these issues together – numbering and emergency access – will allow the Commission to develop a coordinated solution and is an approach that has been supported by both providers and consumers. So, I am particularly pleased that the Commission commits to hold a stakeholder workshop to focus our work on these issues.

I commend Chairman Martin for bringing this item to us, Commissioner Copps for his hard work to improve the final result, and all my colleagues for their commitment to moving forward with a coordinated, long-term solution to the twin issues of emergency access and numbering as expeditiously as possible. We now have the opportunity to raise the bar and improve our relay services permanently, so I look forward to working together with my colleagues, providers, the TRS Advisory Committee, our exceptional Bureau staff, and the many members of the disabilities community, as we move forward.

¹ See Partial Opposition of Telecommunications For The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing, Inc.; Association Of Late-Deafened Adults, Inc.; National Association Of The Deaf; Deaf And Hard Of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network; And California Coalition Of Agencies Serving The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing (Dec. 20, 2007).

² See Letter from Chairman John D. Dingell, Ranking Member Joe Barton, Chairman Edward J. Markey, Ranking Member Fred Upton (Nov. 26, 2007).