

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Access to Video Conferencing*, CG Docket No. 23-161; *Implementation of Sections 716 and 717 of the Communications Act of 1934, as Enacted by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010*, CG Docket No. 10-213; *Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, CG Docket No. 03-123; *Petition of Sorenson Communications, LLC for a Limited Waiver of the Privacy Screen Rule*, Report and Order, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Order (June 8, 2023)

It was a little over a decade ago that I was asked to go to the White House to attend the signing ceremony for the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. It was a gathering I will always remember. For starters, when I was there, I got to meet Stevie Wonder, who is not just a legendary musician but also a tireless champion for access to communications technology for people with disabilities. I also will never forget this day because I had the privilege of working on this historic civil rights legislation when I served as counsel on the Senate Commerce Committee. And signed, sealed, and delivered, there is in fact a signed copy of this legislation on my office wall.

The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act was historic because it updated the Americans with Disabilities Act for the digital age. It put in law the fundamental idea that when technology changes, our accessibility policies need to evolve and keep pace.

When I sat in the White House that day, I never could have imagined the global pandemic that would come ten years later. It was impossible to understand then just how vulnerable we were to Covid and how dramatically a new pathogen would move our lives online. When physical doors closed and group events were cancelled during the pandemic, the virtual spaces provided by conferencing platforms—like Zoom, Teams, and WebEx—became an essential way to connect for work, school, health, and simple contact with family and friends. If you want evidence, just look right here at the Federal Communications Commission. For two years, we held our monthly open meeting—like the one we are at today—over a video conferencing platform.

While we have moved back to in-person meetings, the role video conferencing platforms play in modern life has expanded. It is one of those changes we take with us out of the pandemic. But for people with disabilities this shift has been especially challenging. That’s because inconsistent accessibility features on these platforms have not always made it possible to communicate.

We are changing this today. We start by clarifying that under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, “interoperable video conferencing services” must comply with our accessibility rules. On top of that, we propose new rules to further improve the accessibility of video conferencing services with performance objectives and also propose that our Telecommunications Relay Services fund should support the integration of relay services with video conferencing platforms.

This effort is consistent with the law. It is also aligned with the fundamental idea behind it—that when technology changes our accessibility policies need to evolve and keep pace. That principle was apparent for all at the White House signing ceremony. We give it new meaning today.

The progress we are making here would not be possible without the work of organizations like Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the National Association of the Deaf, Communication Service for the Deaf, the Hearing Loss Association of America, the American Council of the Blind, the American Foundation for the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind, Gallaudet University’s Technology Access Program, and many other organizations representing those with disabilities. We are blessed to have their interest and assistance in this effort.

I want to thank the staff who made this order and rulemaking possible, including Bob Aldrich, Edyael Casaperalta, Darryl Cooper, Eliot Greenwald, Joshua Mendelsohn, Ike Ofobike, Alejandro Roark, Michael Scott, Ross Slutsky, William David Wallace, and Dana Warrick from the Consumer and

Governmental Affairs Bureau; Terry Cavanaugh, Michele Ellison, Richard Mallen, and William Richardson from the Office of General Counsel; Patrick Brogan, Rachel Kazan, Kim Makuch, Mark Montano, Michelle Schaefer, Emily Talaga, Kimberly Wild, and Andrew Wise from the Office of Economics and Analytics; Soumitra Das and Andrew Mulitz from the Office of the Managing Director; Sharon Lee from the Enforcement Bureau; and Matthew G. Baker, Kirk Burgee, Jodie Griffin, and Terri Natoli from the Wireline Competition Bureau.