

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE**

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

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, which entrusted the Federal Communications Commission with the task of ensuring that individuals with speech and hearing disabilities have the same ability to communicate through the telephone system as any other individual. As a result, the Commission created the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund to compensate providers of eligible TRS services. TRS enables persons with hearing and speech disabilities to access the telephone system to make calls to, and receive calls from, voice telephone users and is now available nationwide, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The TRS Fund also supports innovative new relay services like IP relay and video relay service that offer significant progress toward reaching the goal of providing truly functionally equivalent services. I am pleased to support today's item in which we seek comment on how the Commission can improve the administration of the Fund.

Through this Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, I hope we can simplify and clarify the compensation of costs associated with providing TRS services. Greater transparency will provide everyone with the opportunity to ascertain whether TRS compensation rates are reasonable and appropriate.

I want to thank all those who have taken time to discuss these issues with me. It is critically important that we understand directly from persons with hearing and speech disabilities how these services enable them to more effectively participate as citizens and consumers – from interaction with loved one to seeking a loan with a bank. We need to know how to ensure that our programs can be more widely used and consumer friendly. At the same time, we must continue to improve the efficiency of the TRS compensation system to maximize the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of this invaluable program to those who depend upon it.

The Interstate TRS Fund brings telecommunications services to individuals who would not otherwise have access to the telephone network. I remain committed to encouraging the deployment of new services to all Americans.