

**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 and WC Docket No. 05-196, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Earlier this year, the Commission made a commitment to establish a permanent and automated emergency access solution and a ten-digit dialing plan for Internet-based relay services. So, I am pleased that we honor that commitment today by adopting this Order, which sets us on a course to complete those tasks by December 31, 2008 and marks significant progress toward ensuring “functionally equivalent” service for consumers with hearing and speech disabilities.

With this Order, we adopt a permanent emergency access solution and a system of traditional ten-digit numbers for Internet-based relay services. A permanent emergency access solution will enable Internet-based relay service customers to automatically reach the appropriate emergency services, just as hearing users of interconnected VoIP services do. It is telling that users of Internet relay services described emergency access as “unequivocally the most important aspect of VRS and IP Relay functional equivalency.”¹ Similarly, the decision to adopt a true ten-digit dialing system will greatly improve the value of Internet-based relay services for consumers. We establish a comprehensive system, for the first time, that will allow VRS and IP Relay Service users to call and be called by other relay service customers and by hearing customers. It will also permit relay service users to port their numbers when they switch providers. I am also pleased that the accompanying Further Notice seeks comment on consumer protection issues, like slamming and customer privacy. Establishing appropriate consumer safeguards is another important element of ensuring “functional equivalence.”

The progress we make today would not be possible were it not for the tireless efforts of the many consumer representatives who have championed these issues, participated in our stakeholder workshops, and provided critical input to my office and Commission staff. We have also benefited from the numerous providers who have shared their technical expertise and experience as we develop solutions to these long recognized problems, and we will need their continued cooperation as we implement the decisions reached here. I am also grateful for the attention and input of leading members of Congress who on a bipartisan basis have recognized the importance of these issues and asked us to move quickly.²

Finally, the talented staff from our Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and Wireline Competition Bureau deserve particular praise for bringing their expertise and dedication to this task. They have done yeoman’s work sorting through complicated numbering proposals, comparing advantages and disadvantages, and crafting the best elements of each into the current approach. We will need to rely on their continued efforts in order to meet the December 31st deadline for implementation, so I thank them for their contributions to this item and look 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).

to continuing the effort.