

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN KEVIN J. MARTIN**

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

The Commission has taken a number of important actions relating to Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) over the past year. All of these actions have been aimed at fulfilling our statutory goal of ensuring that every person has equal access to this nation's communications services. The proceeding we initiate today, however, may prove to be the most important. It is appropriate, therefore, that we begin it on the cusp of the 16th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Similar to the comprehensive review proceeding that we began last summer with respect to the Universal Service Fund, today we begin a far-reaching inquiry into the TRS Fund. Specifically, by seeking comment on the appropriate cost methodology, what costs should be compensable, and on ways to improve the management and administration of the Fund, we are seeking to protect and maintain its integrity.

We are well aware that there are many Americans with hearing or speech disabilities that depend on TRS services for their daily communication needs. The Fund has seen dramatic growth over the past few years as more and more individuals with disabilities tap into all the benefits that these services offer. And, at the same time, there are an increasing number of TRS providers. Given these circumstances, it is an appropriate time for us to take stock of the operation of this Fund. Indeed, it is our responsibility.

I am pleased that the Commission is undertaking this inquiry and urge all of those that have experience with the TRS program – particularly its providers and users – to participate in this proceeding. I, along with my colleagues, remain committed to improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities by ensuring that they have the same access to communication technologies as people without such disabilities. To this end, we will take all necessary actions to ensure that the TRS program, upon which they rely, is operated as efficiently and effectively as possible.