

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, CG Docket No. 03-123, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, (July 13, 2006).

With this Notice, the Commission seeks comment on ways to improve our administration of the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund. The relay services supported by the TRS Fund serve as vital connections for and to millions of Americans with hearing and speech disabilities. Without federal and state TRS services, these citizens would be left out of the vital communications networks that link our economy. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that telecommunications services for those with hearing and speech disabilities be “functionally equivalent” to those services provided to hearing individuals, and I remain committed to the goals of the ADA.

As communications technologies continue to play a greater role in all of our lives, relay services are an increasingly important tool, and the disability community has been unanimous in its support of these services. Even as use of revolutionary technologies like Video Relay Service (VRS) has surged, the Commission’s compensation rate-setting process for our relay services has presented a variety of open questions and controversy among providers and consumers. I have heard from providers and consumers alike that the Commission can do more to improve its administration of the Fund and to increase awareness of these critical services. So, I commend the Chairman, my colleagues, and the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau for opening this comprehensive proceeding, and I encourage commenters to think creatively about how we can improve the administration of this valuable program. Working together, the Commission can raise the bar and improve our relay services for providers, contributors, and the many consumers with and without hearing disabilities who rely on VRS.

I look forward to working with my colleagues, our CGB staff, members of the TRS Advisory Committee, and the many members of the disabilities community on these issues as we move forward.