

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN KEVIN J. MARTIN**

Re: *Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; Internet-based Captioned Telephone Service, CG Docket No. 03-123*

Today we take another step to help improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. By finding that Internet Protocol (IP) captioned telephone relay service is eligible for reimbursement from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Fund, we make progress in fulfilling our statutory goal of ensuring that every person has equal access to this nation's communications services.

IP captioned relay service allows a broader range of individuals to communicate as it permits users to initiate telephone calls from any Internet-enabled device. By not being constrained to a specific piece of equipment that resides in a particular location, users of this service have tremendous flexibility in how and where they use this service. Moreover, this item ensures that individuals with disabilities have access to new technologies and, specifically, realize the benefits of broadband services.

Because we expect, however, that IP captioned telephone service will not be under the control of just one vendor or provider, the Commission's action is conditioned on the licensing of captioned telephone technologies to all providers. And, although we permit this service to be compensable from the Interstate TRS Fund, it is important to emphasize that this is an interim measure. This past summer, we initiated a proceeding to consider the appropriate cost recovery methodology for relay services, including jurisdictional separation of costs. The Commission is committed to taking all necessary actions to ensure that the TRS program is operated as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is only by doing so that we can continue to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the same access to communication technologies as all other Americans.