

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN KEVIN J. MARTIN**

Re: In the Matter of IP-Enabled Services; Implementation of Sections 255 and 251(a)(2) of the Communications Act of 1934, as Enacted by the Telecommunications Act of 1996: Access to Telecommunications Service, Telecommunications Equipment and Customer Premises Equipment by Persons with Disabilities, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 96-198, Report and Order

Congress mandated that all Americans, including those with disabilities, benefit from advances in telecommunications services and equipment. Nearly eight years ago, the Commission adopted rules to ensure that both telecommunications equipment manufacturers and service providers develop and offer equipment and services in a manner that is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Telecommunications service providers are obligated to contribute to the Telecommunications Relay Services Fund, supporting interstate relay services that help to provide functionally equivalent communications services for individuals with disabilities. Today, we extend these important accessibility and contribution obligations to the provision of interconnected VoIP.

The Commission repeatedly has found that VoIP services are increasingly being marketed and used as a substitute for traditional landline phones. While technologies will continue to evolve, core social goals in the Act regarding the provision of communications services to all remain unchanged.

Since I became Chairman, the Commission has consistently acted to define the appropriate social obligations that apply to evolving classes of broadband services, including VoIP. In 2005, the Commission determined to extend to interconnected VoIP providers E911 obligations, vital to public safety. The Commission also ensured that law enforcement surveillance obligations apply to new, as well as traditional communications services, including interconnected VoIP and broadband. We have also addressed appropriate application of the obligation to contribute to the support of the universal service programs, helping to ensure that communications services are available to all Americans. And earlier this year, the Commission extended obligations to interconnected VoIP providers to protect the privacy of customer information. Today, I am pleased that we extend the important disabilities accessibility and program support obligations in the Act to interconnected VoIP.

Although today's item does not address all of the remaining policy goals, it is a critically important step. We continue to evaluate the remaining obligations including: numbering (access to numbering resources, number portability obligations, and numbering support obligations) and consumer protection issues (service discontinuance notifications, slamming, and billing issues, etc). I hope that by addressing these obligations, the Commission will be able to continue to protect the interests of consumers and establish a competitively neutral playing field for competing services.