

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS, APPROVING**

Re: *In the Matters of IP-Enabled Services, WC Docket No. 04-36; 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, WT Docket No. 96-198; Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, CG Docket No. 03-123; The Use of N11 Codes and Other Abbreviated Dialing Arrangements, CC Docket No. 92-105; Report and Order*

I am pleased to support today's Order because it takes a good step forward to assist the disability community to take full advantage of the services and equipment becoming available in an IP-based world. Improvements in communications technologies, such as cell phones, email, text messaging and videoconferencing, have made the quality of our daily lives better in so many ways for most of us. But these improvements that so many of us take for granted can often be absolutely life-altering for people with disabilities. If they have these new technologies and services available, they have a much better chance to get connected and stay connected with first responders, doctors, employers, family and friends. So we help meet our statutory mission here to ensure that **all** Americans, and that certainly includes some 54 million Americans with disabilities, benefit from advances in telecommunications.

When consumers pick up a phone, they don't worry about whether it is an interconnected VOIP service or a traditional phone service – nor should there be any concern. Therefore it makes sense for the Commission to extend the requirements of section 255 to interconnected VOIP service providers and equipment manufacturers. Section 255 requires, among other things, that equipment manufacturers design and develop their equipment to be accessible for persons with disabilities and that providers ensure that their services are available to this community. I see no reason why these responsibilities should apply any differently to VOIP. We first teed up this question when the Commission adopted its disability access rules in 1999 and again in an NPRM in 2004. Services delayed are services denied, to paraphrase an old aphorism, so clearly it is time for us to act.

I commend the Chairman for getting this Order across the finish line and for working with us to address our concern that the responsibilities set forth in section 225 be required of interconnected VOIP providers, including making 7-1-1 services available for those with hearing and speech disabilities and requiring providers to contribute to the TRS fund. I also appreciate his willingness to recognize in the Order that other issues remain to be addressed as the disabilities community relies on new IP technologies like real time text for both personal and emergency services. Finally, it is my hope that this Order will inspire the VOIP industry to meet and even to go beyond the requirements in this order and inspire the Commission to move quickly on the other important issues in

our IP-enabled Services docket which continue to go unaddressed. That said, this is a good Order and I am pleased to support it.

Some of our good friends from the disabilities communities are here with us this afternoon, others were here for this morning's scheduled meeting but had to leave to meet other commitments when our computers all went down, but I want to thank them all for their work on this and the other items before us today and for their tireless engagement in helping us see the light and do the right thing.