

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
The Honorable Michael J. Copps, Commissioner
The Honorable Robert M. McDowell, Commissioner
The Honorable Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner
The Honorable Meredith Attwell Baker, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Disability Policy
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JG
8/11*

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sets the rate for Video Relay Service (VRS), we write to underscore how important this service is to the deaf community. VRS allows our deaf constituents to connect instantly with the world through a video monitoring system and communicate in their own language, American Sign Language. They describe it as life altering and indispensable. In fact, more than one hundred thousand deaf Americans now rely on VRS to place calls to medical professionals, friends and family, co-workers, and 911.

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the FCC to promote efficiency, improved technology, nationwide access and functional equivalence for the deaf. VRS is arguably the most functionally equivalent form of relay service available today, and it is essential that the Commission establish a fair and predictable VRS rate that promotes these goals. Many are concerned that the Commission's April 30th rate proposals did not include many of the real costs of providing VRS.

We strongly urge you to adopt a VRS rate that is fair and predictable, a rate that will stimulate and encourage the innovation and advancement that have made VRS the preferred method of communication for the deaf. Given that the VRS program was the target of fraudsters in 2009, we think it is very important to improve program accountability and to provide a fair rate of compensation for services that are important to the deaf community. Careful management and appropriate oversight are necessary to preserve and protect the VRS program so that ASL users and hearing people can continue to communicate with each other over distances. We are confident the FCC is up to the challenge and will ensure that progress in communications for the deaf continues.

Sincerely,



Senator Amy Klobuchar



Senator Orrin G. Hatch

25 MAY 2010 RCUD

Letter to the FCC
May 19, 2010



Senator Mark Warner



Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison



Senator John Thune



Senator David Vitter



Senator Mike Johanns