

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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ENERGY AND WATER



ZACH WAMP
UNITED STATES CONGRESS
THIRD DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
May 18, 2010

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The Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
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Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I am writing to express my concern about the Federal Communication Commission's proposal to significantly reduce funding for Video Relay Service (VRS). The Americans with Disabilities Act directs the Commission to ensure deaf and hard of hearing individuals nationwide have access to "functionally equivalent" telecommunications services. VRS broadband service providers across the nation have provided the deaf and hard of hearing access to basic communication services we take for granted. From routine to emergency calls, VRS is the most functionally equivalent service available to individuals who use American Sign Language and is often described as life-changing.

I recently met with employees of a local firm, Sorenson Communications, a Tier 1 provider of VRS. They are concerned about the Commission's proposal to shift from the highly successful long-term "incentive-based compensation" method to a "cost plus" method. According to Sorensen, the proposed method does not account for the actual costs of providing VRS and will result in a sharp reduction in the VRS rate, threatening the company's ability to provide this service. This methodology is comparable to considering tuition as the sole cost of a college education without regard to books, housing, meals, and other basic necessities.

As you set the course for VRS, I urge you to carry out your responsibilities under the ADA to promote efficiency, improved technology, nationwide access and functional equivalence for the deaf and hard of hearing. I ask you to adopt a rate that is equitable while encouraging the innovation and advancement that have made VRS the preferred method of communication for the deaf.

Warmest regards,

Zach
Zach Wamp
Member of Congress

ZW/kbs

Cc: Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker

2 JUN 2010 RCUD