

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CG Docket No. 16-145; *Petition for Rulemaking to Update the Commission's Rules for Access to Support the Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology*, and *Petition for Waiver of Rules Requiring Support of TTY Technology*, GN Docket No. 15-178

I strongly support today's *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, not only because it is one of those rare gems that enjoys the unmitigated endorsement of a broad base of stakeholders, including consumer organizations, telecommunications providers, and trade associations, but it also significantly furthers my desire to connect communities and promote universal opportunities for all.

There is no question that TTY was a transformative and welcomed technology when it was developed over fifty years ago. Prior to its introduction, those in the deaf and hard of hearing community were unable to truly harness the benefits of communication by telephone. They had to rely on the assistance of family, friends and neighbors to make calls or travel great distances to engage in face-to-face conversations, and too many lacked the means to contact 911 emergency services in times of distress. TTY radically improved the quality of life for those who were separated from the rest of society when it came to Alexander Graham Bell's great invention.

Like so many other inventions, this technology has evolved, making TTY obsolete in today's IP-based communications environment. So we officially and enthusiastically embrace a more modern solution that takes advantage of the technological innovations and services developed over the last five decades, and better enables those consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech disabled to conduct business and stay connected with their friends, family and emergency services.

The benefits of real-time text are myriad and notable. Designed for IP networks, it is faster, more reliable and easier to use. It facilitates real-time interaction and enables a greater range of possibilities for communication, including the seamless integration of voice and text, the ability to communicate in languages other than English, and most importantly, the ability to contact 911 emergency services in real time without having to press send to initiate the dispatch of assistance.

Available on smartphones, tablets or any other Internet-connected device that has a keyboard and a screen, real-time text, unlike TTY, does not require the procurement of a separate device. It is a highly mobile accessibility solution that provides *all* consumers a 21st century means of keeping in touch and seamlessly connects users to their community.

But TTY, still the only technology of its type used on the PSTN, remains a vital lifeline for those who rely on it, including senior citizens, rural residents and those who do not have or cannot afford high speed Internet access. Because of this, the *Notice* correctly proposes a backward compatibility requirement to ensure non-interrupted access for those consumers who continue to depend on TTY. The *Notice* also seeks comment on whether it would be particularly beneficial for ICS providers to offer real-time text to inmates. I specifically requested the inclusion of this line of inquiry because I am ever mindful of the unique challenges deaf and hard of hearing inmates face connecting with loved ones outside of prison walls.

The Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, once again, should be applauded for its leadership and stellar work on this item. We are on the path to providing consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech disabled greater privacy and independence, more portable and less

expensive options, and the ability to take advantage of novel communications services as they emerge. That is no small feat – and the hard work of everyone involved to get to this point is commendable.