

Media Contact:

Mike Snyder, (202) 418-0997
michael.snyder@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

FCC VOTES TO STRENGTHEN AND SUSTAIN IP CAPTIONED TELEPHONE SERVICE FOR AMERICANS WITH HEARING LOSS

Agency Moves to Modernize IP CTS, Reform Compensation and Funding, and Reduce Unnecessary Use

WASHINGTON, June 7, 2018—The Federal Communications Commission today approved an item to reform Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) and help ensure that this critical communications service remains sustainable for Americans with hearing loss who need it.

IP CTS is a form of [telecommunications relay service](#) (TRS) that allows individuals with hearing loss to both read captions and use their residual hearing to understand a telephone conversation. Use of IP CTS—which is paid for entirely through the FCC’s TRS Fund—has grown exponentially in recent years. As a result, IP CTS now represents almost 80 percent of the total minutes compensated by the TRS Fund—at a cost of nearly one billion dollars a year. At the same time, the contribution base supporting the TRS Fund is shrinking. As both of these trends continue, potential waste in the IP CTS program poses an ever-increasing threat to the viability of this important service.

Today’s Report and Order, Declaratory Ruling, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Notice of Inquiry take steps and explore others to preserve the viability of IP CTS for people with hearing loss who need it. The FCC set interim IP CTS provider compensation rates to bring those rates closer to actual average provider costs. This move will save the TRS Fund nearly \$400 million over the next two years. The Commission also adopted rules to limit unnecessary IP CTS use and waste of the TRS Fund, including a general prohibition on providing IP CTS to ineligible users.

The Commission also took an important step toward modernizing IP CTS by allowing service providers to use fully automated speech recognition (ASR) to produce captions. The FCC made clear that providers using this technology must meet the agency’s minimum TRS standards, which are designed to ensure that users receive service that is functionally equivalent to voice telephone services.

The FCC is also seeking comment on measures to improve the compensation plan, funding, and structure of the IP CTS program and to curb provider practices that could be incenting use of IP CTS by people who may not need it. And to ensure service quality for users, the Commission is seeking comment on IP CTS performance goals and metrics.

Action by the Commission June 7, 2018 by Report and Order, Declaratory Ruling, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Notice of Inquiry (FCC 18-79). Chairman Pai and Commissioner Carr approving. Commissioner O’Rielly approving in part and concurring in

part. Commissioner Rosenworcel concurring. Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly, Carr, and Rosenworcel issuing separate statements.

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Office of Media Relations: (202) 418-0500
ASL Videophone: (844) 432-2275
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Twitter: @FCC
www.fcc.gov/office-media-relations

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