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For Immediate Release

**FCC ACTS TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF IP CAPTIONED
TELEPHONE SERVICE FOR AMERICANS WITH HEARING LOSS**

Commission Also Seeks to Alleviate Hurdles to 911 Connectivity for IP CTS Users

WASHINGTON, February 14, 2019—The Federal Communications Commission today took steps to improve Internet-based relay services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and communicate by speaking. The Commission approved new rules and proposed further regulations to enhance program management, prevent waste, fraud, and abuse, and improve emergency call handling in its Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) program.

IP captioned phone service is a form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) that allows people with hearing loss to speak to friends, family members, or business associates by simultaneously reading captions and using their residual hearing to understand a telephone conversation. Support for this heavily-used service is provided by the FCC through the TRS Fund.

In the new rules adopted today, the Commission is integrating IP CTS into the TRS User Registration Database, a centralized system of records currently used in the Video Relay Service (VRS) program. Including IP CTS user registrations in this database will help the Commission verify the identity of IP CTS users, audit and review IP CTS provider practices, and substantiate provider compensation requests. In addition, the Commission proposes requiring IP CTS providers to add user account identifiers to call records submitted for compensation. These efforts seek to combat misuse of funds and ensure money is actually used appropriately to support hard-of-hearing Americans.

The Commission also proposed to simplify the handling of 911 calls by no longer requiring IP CTS providers to serve as an unnecessary intermediary in connecting 911 call centers and IP CTS users. If a mobile and web-based IP CTS user has a telephone number that enables the delivery of captions when an emergency dispatcher needs to reconnect a disconnected call, the Commission is proposing to relieve the IP CTS provider of the need to involve its captioning assistants in reconnecting such calls and to transmit additional data such as an ID and callback number for the person providing captions. This will expedite the processing of emergency calls and save valuable time in responding to emergencies. Pending the proposed rulemaking's outcome, the Commission has granted a partial waiver of most of these requirements.

Action by the Commission February 14, 2019 by Report and Order, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Order (FCC 19-11). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O'Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks approving and issuing separate statements.

CG Docket Nos. 13-24; 03-123

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