

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Misuse of Internet Protocol (IP) Captioned Telephone Service*, CG Docket No. 13-24;
Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, CG Docket No. 03-123

In 1952, Bell Labs achieved a breakthrough in communications technology. It created a machine called “Audrey,” which was short for “Automatic Digit Recognition.” Audrey could recognize the voice of a person who spoke a number from zero to nine. More than 60 years later, voice recognition software is pervasive in our society. Many of our smartphones, homes, TV remotes, and other devices recognize our voices and perform a series of commands at the drop of a hat. I know that firsthand, as my kids enjoy asking Alexa to play music every morning (current favorite: “Celebration” by Kool & the Gang, which to my ears is an improvement from having JoJo Siwa on a continuous loop). These voice recognition technologies can also be used to transfer voice to text and help individuals with hearing loss communicate and better participate in daily life.

This technological innovation extends to FCC’s Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS). This program allows individuals with hearing loss to both read captions and use their residual hearing to understand a phone conversation. As I was pleased to highlight last June, IP CTS has had a profoundly positive impact on the lives of many Americans affected by hearing loss. And it has grown significantly in recent years—annual IP CTS minutes of use have gone up more than 12-fold from 2011 to 2017, and IP CTS now represents almost 80% of the total minutes compensated by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund.

Today, the FCC is building on the important IP CTS reforms we made in June 2018 to promote improvements in two basic areas: accountability and public safety.

First, we improve program accountability by integrating IP CTS into the User Registration Database and aligning IP CTS data submission and verification rules with those that currently apply to the Video Relay Service (VRS). This will make the program more sustainable and financially responsible by ensuring that providers are compensated only for calls made by individuals who are in fact eligible to use this service. In addition, in the *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, we propose to require IP CTS providers to include a unique user account identifier in monthly call detail records submitted for TRS Fund compensation. This will enable the Fund administrator to more efficiently match call data with user data in the Database.

Second, to promote public safety, we propose to better safeguard the lives of IP CTS users who place 911 calls over the Internet. We would do this by eliminating the need for IP CTS providers to involve Communications Assistants—those who provide captions to the IP CTS user—in handling 911 calls, which currently can cost precious time during an emergency. In addition, we grant a temporary, partial waiver of the Commission’s rules on emergency call-handling in order to enable an emergency authority to quickly call an IP CTS user back via IP CTS. These are simple but significant steps that will greatly aid consumers in times of need.

Today’s results would not be possible without the work of Karen Peltz Strauss (now retired), Bob Aldrich, Eliot Greenwald, and Michael Scott of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Giulia McHenry, Emily Talaga, and Chuck Needy of the Office of Economics and Analytics; Richard Mallen, Bill Richardson, Malena Barzilai, Anjali Singh, and David Horowitz of the Office of the General Counsel; David Schmidt, Andy Mulitz, Leo Wong, and Leslie Smith of the Office of the Managing Director; Sharon Lee of the Enforcement Bureau; David Furth of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; and Belford Lawson of Office of Communications Business Opportunities. My thanks to each of you.