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For Immediate Release

**FCC ELIMINATES THREE LEGACY TELECOMMUNICATIONS
RELAY SERVICES RULES**

WASHINGTON, August 5, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today approved a Report and Order that eliminates three outdated telecommunications relay services (TRS) rules. Due to changes in technology and voice communications services, the Commission determined that these rules are no longer needed.

TRS enables people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind or have a speech disability to communicate with others in a manner that is “functionally equivalent” to voice telephone service. The Commission initially adopted TRS rules in 1991, on the first anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act. Since then, advances in technology and other voice service market changes have led the Commission to reassess the need for some of the rules.

The Report and Order approved today repeals the “equal access” rule requiring that TRS users be allowed to choose a carrier for long distance TRS calls. Today, voice customers routinely receive telephone service at a bundled or flat rate, with no separate time- or distance-sensitive fees for long distance calls. For that reason, the Commission determined that requiring TRS providers to offer users the ability to select a long-distance carrier is no longer necessary to ensure that TRS is functionally equivalent to voice services. Moreover, repealing the equal access rule will allow TRS providers to modernize their facilities and discontinue what can be a confusing and time-consuming call setup process for consumers.

For similar reasons, the Commission has deemed that alternative billing options (e.g., collect and credit card billing) are no longer necessary for TRS, especially because virtually all TRS calls are free to the user. Furthermore, eliminating this rule will relieve TRS providers from any need to maintain obsolete features of circuit-switched networks at a time when they and others within the communications industry are transitioning to IP-based platforms. Thus, repealing the billing options rule will benefit TRS providers and users by allowing technological improvements with no consequential costs or harms to the functional equivalence and efficiency of TRS.

In today’s action, the Commission also removed the requirement that public notices of applications for certification of state TRS programs be published in the Federal Register. The public notices will still be available to interested parties on the Commission’s website and in the FCC’s electronic document management system (EDOCS).

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).