

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. McDOWELL**

Re: IP-Enabled Services; Implementation of Sections 255 and 251 (a)(2) of the Communications Act of 1934, as Enacted by the Telecommunications Act of 1996: Access to Telecommunications Service, Telecommunications Equipment and Customer Premises Equipment by Persons with Disabilities; Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, The Use of N11 Codes and Other Abbreviated Dialing Arrangements, WC Docket No. 04-36, WT Docket No. 96-198, CG Docket No. 03-123, CC Docket No. 92-105.

The fundamental mission of government is to help those who can't help themselves in the absence of a private sector solution. Today we do just that. Our action helps Americans with disabilities access communications services and equipment needed to improve the quality of their lives, or perhaps to save their lives.

Today, we appropriately extend Section 255 obligations of accessibility for individuals with disabilities to providers of interconnected VoIP services and manufacturers of specialized interconnected VoIP equipment and CPE. Similarly, we require providers of interconnected VoIP services to provide Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) and 711 abbreviated dialing for TRS access, as well as to contribute to the Interstate TRS Fund. These actions are consistent with the letter and spirit of Sections 225 and 255.

The Commission, under the leadership of Chairman Martin and with the able assistance of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, has consistently and diligently worked to carry out the directives of the Communications Act that the hearing and speech impaired community have available "functionally equivalent" communications services. Because VoIP services are rapidly becoming a substitute for traditional phone service in the marketplace, it is imperative that we extend accessibility obligations to those services. Also, today's action is consistent with previous Commission decisions to assure that the ever-increasing number of VoIP service customers have the same protections, accessibility and features as traditional telephone service, such as emergency 911 calling capabilities, universal service contribution obligations, and customer proprietary network information protections.

I wholeheartedly support this effort to improve the availability and choices of services that allow the hearing and speech impaired community to obtain "functionally equivalent" communications services.