

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; Speech-to-Speech and Internet Protocol (IP) Speech-to-Speech Telecommunications Relay Services, CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 08-15, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

I am pleased to support this Notice seeking comment on ways to improve Speech-to-Speech relay service, a vital connection for Americans with speech disabilities. Speech-to-Speech relay service uses specially-trained communications assistants who understand the speech patterns of persons with speech disabilities and can repeat the words to the other party to the call. By seeking comment on important technical aspects of our Speech-to-Speech relay service requirements -- including extending minimum call lengths, providing better options for voice muting, and enhancing access to 711, our nationwide code for access to relay services -- we seek to recognize and respond to the unique needs of Speech-to-Speech users. Perhaps most importantly, we tentatively conclude the Internet-based Speech-to-Speech relay service should be compensable from the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund. Consumers explain that IP-based Speech-to-Speech relay service offers several distinct benefits, including ease of use and mobility, over traditional Speech-to-Speech relay services.

Taken together, these proposals have the potential to measurably improve the services available to those with speech disabilities, bringing us closer to our guiding principle of functional equivalence under the Americans with Disabilities Act. My thanks to the staff of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau for their hard work on this item, and I look forward to working with all my colleagues, consumers, and the Bureau as we move forward expeditiously with these proposals.