

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: *Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, Section 103(b): Section 715 of the Communications Act of 1934*, CG Docket No. 11-47, *Implementation of Sections 716 and 717 of the Communications Act of 1934, as Enacted by the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010*, CG Docket No. 10-213, *Amendments to the Commission's Rules Implementing Sections 255 and 251(a) (2) of the Communications Act of 1934, as Enacted by the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, WT Docket No. 96-198, *In the Matter of Accessible Mobile Phone Options for People who are Blind, Deaf-Blind, or Have Low Vision*, CG Docket No. 10-145, *In the Matter of Video Description: Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010*, MB Docket No. 11-43.

The central goal of the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, signed into law last fall, is a profoundly important one in a world where communications technologies are increasingly becoming central to participation in our economy and our democracy: to ensure that people with disabilities have access to 21st Century communications technologies.

The statute assigns the FCC a vital role in the implementation of this landmark legislation, and as I've said before, we intend to work with consumer, business, government and non-profit stakeholders to ensure that the Act is implemented quickly and effectively.

We've already taken a number of significant steps:

- We launched a rulemaking to ensure that telephones and other devices used with advanced communications services are compatible with hearing aids.
- We established and held the first meetings of the two Advisory Committees required by the new law: the Video Programming Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Emergency Access Advisory Committee.
- We initiated a proceeding to implement a national equipment distribution program that will bring assistive communications technologies to the deaf-blind community.
- And we have been proactively gathering feedback on how best to set up the clearinghouse of accessible products and services required by the Act.

Today the Commission took three additional steps to fulfill Congress's vision by proposing accessibility rules for advanced communications services, video description rules, and rules to extend participation in the TRS Fund to non-interconnected VoIP service providers.

The rules proposed in the Advanced Communications Item will ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to a wider array of IP-based and other advanced communications services and devices. There's no longer a dispute on this central point: access to technology means access to jobs and full participation in our society and the global economy. With access to broadband, an individual with disabilities can telecommute or run a business out of her home; receive remote health and job-related support; or gain access to online educational classes and digital books.

The proposed rules would give manufacturers and service providers flexibility to implement innovative solutions at the development stage and use third party applications so that they can

make technology accessible in the most cost-effective, efficient manner and so that disabled individuals won't have to wait years or decades to use new technologies.

Building accessibility in early reduces the costs and burdens of compliance, while increasing the benefits to the public.

Consistent with that spirit, the Advanced Communications notice also considers allowing for waivers and exemptions in appropriate cases for small businesses and entrepreneurs that provide advanced communications services and devices, in recognition of the significant value they add to the economy and the fact that they may lack the legal, financial or technical capability to incorporate accessibility features.

We approach this issue in the same spirit that we try to approach all issues: in an effort to promote predictability and reduce uncertainty; taking into account the benefits and costs of our actions and using the best, most innovative and least burdensome tools for achieving the regulatory ends set to us by Congress.

Video description will do for people who are blind or visually impaired what closed-captioning has done for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. By providing a verbal description of scenes in television programming that do not have dialog, video description provides individuals who are blind or visually impaired better access to TV programming and allows these individuals to participate more fully in cultural and civic life.

Video description also offers broader benefits: for example video description has been shown to benefit children with learning disabilities. By reinforcing visual information with an audio description, this technology makes it easier for video programming to capture the attention of children with learning disabilities and enhance their information processing skills.

Finally, in the third item, we propose rules that would require non-interconnected VoIP service providers to contribute to the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, an important fund that compensates TRS providers for the reasonable costs of providing the service on an interstate basis. These services allow individuals with hearing and speech disabilities to engage in wired and wireless communications in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of individuals without such disabilities. The Commission's rules have required interconnected VoIP providers to contribute to the TRS fund since 2007, and the new Accessibility Law mandates that non-interconnected VoIP service providers do so as well.

Today, I am delighted to move closer to the day when the 36 million Americans who are deaf or hard of hearing and the 25 million Americans who are blind or visually impaired can enjoy all the benefits of new and old communications technologies and services so that they too can participate fully in the economic, civic and cultural life of the nation.