

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program*, CG Docket No. 10-51;
Telecommunications Relay Service and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, CG Docket No. 03-123

It should go without saying, but I will give voice to it anyway: Video Relay Service (VRS) is a vitally important program for those in our community who are deaf or hard of hearing. It provides access to a world beyond American Sign Language, allowing individuals to more seamlessly connect and communicate to those who literally do not speak their language. And providing such access is not only the right thing to do, it is key to fulfilling the functional equivalence goal mandated by the Communications Act.

As an FCC Commissioner, I welcome the opportunity to improve service for those who need it, enable choice for all consumers, and promote robust competition in an ever evolving marketplace. And if we can achieve these objectives, while simultaneously making a service more cost-effective for the ratepayers who support it, then that docket will have my support.

The item we adopt today proposes several key steps that could improve VRS going forward by piloting several trials, both for users and for VRS providers, who are looking to attract qualified interpreters. It also seeks comment on how to improve service quality and devotes significant thought to restructuring our compensation system so that users will continue to have choice in the market, all while ensuring that the Commission and the ratepayers are getting the best bang for the buck.

I am particularly pleased that the draft includes questions on how to decrease scam calls to VRS users. Just last month, the IRS issued a warning about a new scam targeting VRS users. Like you, I believe it is downright shameful that people are taking advantage of deaf and hard of hearing individuals via VRS or any other means. And I am pretty sure that it is not accidental that the Chairman has included in a separate docket today the opportunity for us to take action to combat the problem of scam robocalls. It is only fitting that we do the same for VRS users. I am also pleased that we seek comment on how to decrease competitive bottlenecks by improving access to interpreters and on how to address inducements that some providers may use to lure individuals to use their service.

As always, my thanks go to the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, as well as those in the Disability Rights Office, for working to ensure that individuals with disabilities are closer to communicating with the world in a functionally equivalent manner.