

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-)	CG Docket No. 03-123
To-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing)	
And Speech Disabilities)	
)	
Structure and Practice of the Video Relay Service)	CG Docket No. 10-51
Program)	

REPLY COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SPRINT'S PETITION FOR WAIVERS

Deaf Seniors of America

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Deaf Seniors of America, a national consumer organization of deaf seniors including deafblind seniors, strongly recommends that the Federal Communications Commission observe its main objective, that of developing regulations **on behalf of consumers** when it was established in 1934.

As stated in *Lifeline for Deaf People*, a recent video documentary that can be found on www.deafseniors.us, back in 1876 Alexander Graham Bell, hearing teacher of deaf children, unwittingly created hardships for deaf and deafblind individuals due to their inability to use the telephone as it worked only for hearing people. This population of disadvantaged citizens had to wait 88 years for Robert Weitbrecht, deaf scientist, who in 1964 invented a modem that enabled teletypewriters to communicate through voice lines. This invention opened many doors for people with hearing disabilities. Eventually, Tele-Braille was developed in order to enable deafblind people to communicate directly with deaf people and with hearing people through telecommunication relay services.

The change from analog to Internet-based services resulted in the deaf public transitioning from the use of teletypewriters to the use of visual-based video technology. This transition has had the unintended consequence of a drastic decrease in the ability of deafblind people to access telecommunication services that enable them to communicate with the public, including both deaf and hearing people. Since relay service providers rely on sufficient numbers to exist, all but one provider discontinued their services.

Sprint is to be applauded for continuing to provide the **remaining** lifeline for deafblind people, namely Internet Relay Services (IP Relay) despite low numbers.

In the past at least **TEN** years, the Commission has held a number of meetings or workshops to find ways and means to restore and maintain accessibility for deafblind individuals, with no concluding decision.

As of today, it appears the Commission, while still “reviewing” deafblind services for the past at least **TEN** years, is now inhumanely considering shortening the already drastically shortened lifeline of deafblind people by shrinking the rates for their sole remaining lifeline, and thereby threatening hardship for the sole provider to humanely continue telecommunication services for deafblind people.

In closing, it is strongly recommended that the Commission start considering any reduction to IP Relay rates **AFTER** acceptable alternatives have been implemented for this severely underserved population!