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July 7, 1999

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
The Portals  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
12<sup>th</sup> Street Lobby, TW-A325  
Washington, DC 20554

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JUL 7 1999

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

**Re: Ex Parte Notification  
WT Docket No. 96-198**

Dear Ms. Salas:

On Tuesday, July 7, 1999, Sylvia Rosenthal and Maureen Lewis representing the Alliance for Public Technology (APT), Jennifer Kemp representing the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Alan Dinsmore representing the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), and Mary McDermott and Todd Lantor representing the Personal Communications Industry Association (PCIA), met with Kathryn Brown and Ellen Blackler to discuss the above-reference docket.

During the course of the meeting, consumer participants discussed the importance of communications services and equipment, including voice mail and interactive menus, to the disability community and other consumers. PCIA indicated that the consensus of its carrier members is to focus primarily on ensuring that the FCC meaningfully applies the "reasonably achievable" standard so that Section 255 compliance is not burdensome. If the FCC does so, PCIA believes that consumers, the industry, and the FCC can work together to achieve accessibility that meets the spirit of Section 255 of the Act. All of the participants strongly support the Commission's

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\*Organization is for identification purposes only.

goal of ensuring that all Americans have access to telecommunications products and services.

The participants also discussed how the Commission's process for handling Section 255 complaints can be most effective. Complaints filed with the Commission, which cannot be resolved through informal discussion, should be expeditiously resolved by the Commission and must not be allowed to languish. Timely resolution of outstanding formal complaints will benefit everyone involved.

Attached is a handout distributed by representatives from the disability community to FCC staff at yesterday's meeting. Pursuant to §1.1206(b) of the Commission's rules, an original and one copy of this letter are being filed with your office. Should you have any questions concerning this filing, please feel free to contact me at (202) 263-2971.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sylvia Rosenthal".

Sylvia Rosenthal  
Executive Director  
Alliance for Public Technology

Attachment

Cc: Kathryn Brown  
Ellen Blackler

SECTION 255 - A Consumer Perspective  
July 6, 1999

1. The goal of the '96 Act is to create communications access. Without access to voice mail and voice-prompted menus, TTY users do not have access to telecommunications services that are covered in the Act.
2. Industry is best suited to finding a solution. The Commission does not have the resources to research and find the solution, but it can provide an environment that would foster a solution. Including voice mail and voice prompts under Section 255 is an example.
3. A solution would be the next big electronic curb cut. Everyone is frustrated and would like to be able to control the way they receive voice mail messages and menu prompts.
4. A readily achievable" standard will mean that Section 255 will not be burdensome on the industry. They will want to work with the disability community and the FCC to implement Section 255 on the full scope of services covered by the FCC order
5. A strong Section 255 rule provides a historic opportunity for the Commission to advance equal opportunity of employment for people with disabilities and to serve the 54 million Americans with disabilities who are consumers of telecommunications services.

*The Alliance for Public Technology*  
*The American Foundation for the Blind*  
*The Communications Workers of America*  
*The President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities*  
*The World Institute on Disability*  
*With support from the Personal Communications Industry*  
*Association*