



Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20554

98-67
03-123



JUN 9 2005

Control No. 0501072-DRO

The Honorable George Allen
United States Senator
507 East Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23219

RECEIVED

JUN 27 2005

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Dear Senator Allen:

Thank you for your letter of May 10, 2005, to the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC), on behalf of your constituent, Ms. Ranica Fitch, expressing her support for, and concerns regarding Video Relay Service (VRS), a form of telecommunications relay service (TRS). Your correspondence was forwarded to the Commission's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau for handling.

Ms. Fitch's letter states that she "loves" the service, but would like to see more interpreters hired to decrease the time spent waiting for a VRS interpreter. Ms. Fitch also expresses concern over not being able to reach individuals who use D-Link videophones.

The Commission has always been, and continues to be, supportive of the provision of VRS. Although VRS has been widely used only the past three years, in the past six months alone, usage has grown from 1,150,935 minutes in September, 2004 to 1,813,388 minutes in March, 2005. All of these minutes are funded from the Interstate TRS Fund, which the Commission oversees.

Ms. Fitch's concerns relate to two issues currently being considered by the FCC: interoperability of equipment used to access VRS and the "speed of answer" for VRS. On February 15, 2005, the California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing filed a Petition for Declaratory Ruling on Interoperability, requesting that the FCC prohibit any VRS provider that receives compensation from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund from purposely restricting its deaf and hard-of-hearing customers to a single VRS provider via the software or hardware of their VRS equipment or through exclusivity agreements with those customers. On March 1, 2005, the FCC released a Public Notice (DA 05-509) seeking public comment on this issue. Comments were due April 15, 2005, and reply comments were due May 2, 2005. The issue of interoperability will be addressed in a future order.

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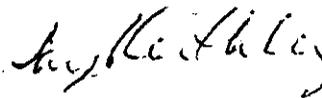
The Commission understands and shares Ms. Fitch's concern over the amount of time sometimes needed to reach a VRS communications assistant, or an "interpreter" as Ms. Fitch refers to them. There is currently no speed of answer requirement mandating how quickly a VRS provider must answer an incoming VRS call. The Commission waived the application of its traditional speed of answer rule for VRS to allow providers to gain experience in their ability to handle VRS traffic. However, this issue is raised in a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) the Commission released on June 30, 2004 (FCC 04-137). The Commission sought further comment on the speed of answer issue in a Public Notice released on February 8, 2005 (DA 05-339), and the speed of answer issue for VRS will also be addressed in a future order.

The Commission encourages Ms. Fitch to actively participate in proceedings before the Commission to ensure that her opinions are expressed and considered fully. The Commission has available a Consumer Information Registry e-mail service that will deliver to subscribers customized information about the FCC's actions and related developments in telecommunications, disability issues, and other communications services. To subscribe to this e-mail service, Ms. Fitch should go to <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>, click on subscribe, and fill in the requested information in order to receive future updates on the topics chosen.

The Commission also invites Ms. Fitch to visit the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's Internet web site at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb> or the Commission's Home Page located at <http://www.fcc.gov>.

A copy of Ms. Fitch's correspondence has been placed in the public record for these proceedings. The Commission appreciates your inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Jay Keithley
Deputy Bureau Chief
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

GEORGE ALLEN
VIRGINIA

204 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4604

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COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
ENERGY
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

United States Senate

May 10, 2005

0500978
CCB
Policy Draft
10/12

Ms. Diane Atkinson
Congressional Liaison Specialist
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Leg. and Intergovernmental Affairs
445 12th Street, S.W.
Room 8-C453
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Ms. Atkinson:

Enclosed is correspondence from my constituent in reference to a matter involving your agency.

Your immediate attention and expeditious assistance with the requests and concerns expressed in this case would be greatly appreciated.

Please reply in duplicate to my office at Richmond and return the enclosure. Should you need to reach my office, please call 804/771-2221. In your reply, please reference Ranica Fitch.

Thank you so much for your assistance to my constituent.

With warm regards, I remain

Sincerely,

George Allen

23 MAY 2005 3:00 PM

Enclosure

CENTRAL VIRGINIA
507 EAST FRANKLIN STREET
RICHMOND, VA 23219
(804) 771-2221
(804) 771-8313 (FAX)

HAMPTON ROADS
222 CENTRAL PARK AVENUE, #120
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23462
(757) 518-1674
(757) 518-1679 (FAX)

WESTERN AND VALLEY
3140 CHAPARRAL DRIVE, #C-101
ROANOKE, VA 24018
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(540) 772-6870 (FAX)

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
332 CUMMINGS STREET, SUITE C
ABINGDON, VA 24210
(276) 876-2646
(276) 676-2588 (FAX)

NORTHERN VIRGINIA
2214 ROCK HILL ROAD, SUITE 100
HERNDON, VA 20170
(703) 435-0039
(703) 435-3446 (FAX)

Ranica Fitch
233 V.E.S. Road
Lynchburg, VA 24503

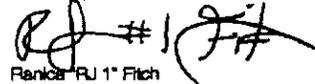
April 11, 2005

George Allen
3140 Chaparral Dr.
Bldg. C, Suite 101
Roanoke, VA 24018

Dear Senator Allen:

I would like to express what problem I'm having right now. We have this hot issue for deaf and hard of hearing people which is about Video Relay Service. Video Relay Service is for communication for deaf people to use on the TV and have a camera with DSL. It has lots of good experiences for us, the deaf people. We, the deaf people, love using the Video Relay Service and we couldn't live with out it. Video Relay Service (VRS) is much better than Internet Relay on the computer, because on VRS, you can see everything included expressions, and face to face, better than just read what operator says from that person talking. I suggest you to hire more interpreters so we don't have to wait longer that much. And one thing more that my concern is calling some people from D-Link, because it has different IP address and has difficulty to call them. Other than my concerns, I'm enjoying it a lot and thanks for your time reading it.

Sincerely,

 #1
Ranica "RJ" Fitch

1809

Ranica Fitch
233 V.E.S. Road
Lynchburg, VA 24503

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2005 APR 20 11:12:51

April 11, 2005

Federal Communications Commission,
Consumer & Government Affairs Bureau, Consumer Complaints
445 12th Street, SW,
Washington, D.C. 20564

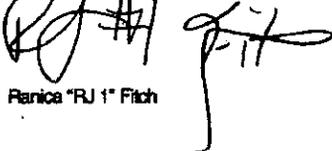
Dear Federal Communications Commission:

I would like to express my feelings about video relay service. I didn't know about it until I went to Model Secondary School for the Deaf. I tried to use VRS, it got me already addicted to it, and even it was my first time using it. I always use it to talk with my friends from other school and talk with my mother. Of course, my family is hearing, and I used to use the Internet Relay (www.relaycall.com), it was all boring. But I used VRS to test if it'd be better or not. It got me all shocked and loved it when I talked with my mother. Because Internet Relay is almost like monotonous and nothing is interested, so I stopped and use VRS a lot right now.

I love using VRS, and I couldn't stop using it. I use it often like 3 times a week for talking with my deaf friends from other deaf schools and hearing family. One thing that makes me crazy is waiting for an interpreter to answer me, because I used to wait for almost 30 minutes, but it worth it. Because it was so much fun and cool, because the interpreter shows all those expressions that my mom did on the phone and copied my expressions.

I suggest you to hire more interpreters so we don't have to wait longer that much. And one thing that my concern is calling some people from D-Link, because it has different IP address and has difficulty to call them. Other than my concerns, I'm enjoying it a lot. Thanks for your time reading it.

Sincerely,



Ranica "RJ" Fitch

CC: Senator George Allen
Senator John Warner
House of Rep. Bob Goodlatte