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May 25, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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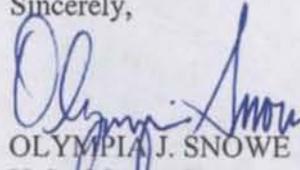
Dear Chairman Genachowski:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) considers proposed compensation rates for the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Fund submitted by the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA), I want to highlight the importance of the Video Relay Service (VRS) program as an indispensable communications tool for the deaf community. VRS allows people with hearing disabilities in Maine and across the country to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment, rather than through typed text. With VRS, deaf Americans are able to place calls easily to family and friends, co-workers, their doctors, and even first responders.

On April 30th, the Commission announced, through a Public Notice, that it was seeking comment on whether it should adopt NECA's proposed rates for the 2010-2011 Fund year. In the FCC's evaluation and adoption of a rate structure, I urge the FCC to strike the proper balance between ensuring the continue health and viability of the program and improving the overall integrity of this valuable service. The significant fraud that allegedly occurred recently in the VRS program is deeply disconcerting and warrants applying the appropriate safeguards to protect the program from being a victim of future fraud and abuse. I appreciate the FCC reaffirming its strong commitment to the program and desire to ensure that its users will be able to continue to receive the significant benefits it provides.

Utilizing fact-based analysis and the public comment the Commission receives, I am confident you will adopt a fair and certain rate and implement more effective management and oversight that will guarantee the continued integrity of this essential communications service for deaf Americans. I look forward to working with the Commission, NECA, VRS providers, and the deaf community to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,


OLYMPIA J. SNOWE
United States Senator

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 5, 2010

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Snowe:

Thank you for your letter regarding the reimbursement rate for Video Relay Service (VRS). I share your support for VRS, which has become a critical communications tool for many who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On June 28, 2010, the Commission unanimously adopted two items to address immediate and long-term approaches for sustaining the vital Telecommunications Relay Services, of which VRS is one form. In an *Order*, the Commission sets interim VRS rates for the July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 period at \$6.2390 for Tier I, \$6.2335 for Tier II, and \$5.0668 for Tier III. These rates represent the average of the current tiered rates and NECA's proposed rates based on actual, historical costs. The *Order* notes that these rates also reflect a balance between the goal of ensuring that VRS providers recover from the VRS Fund only the reasonable costs caused by their provision of VRS and the goal of ensuring quality and sufficient service during a one-year period.

The other item adopted on June 28 is a *Notice of Inquiry* to take a fresh look at the VRS rules with an eye to ensuring that this vital program remains effective, efficient, and sustainable in the future. The *Notice* poses questions that delve into many cost and reimbursement related issues, seeking to make the program less susceptible to the waste, fraud, and abuse that have plagued the current program. Bringing clarity and predictability to VRS compensation is high on the Commission's list of priorities, and we will resolve this proceeding as expeditiously as possible. I am enclosing a copy of the Commission's News Release for your information.

I appreciate your continuing interest in this very important matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Julius Genachowski".

Julius Genachowski