

March 6, 2012

Via Electronic Filing

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: *Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program*, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CG Docket Nos. 10-51, 03-123, FCC 11-184 (rel. Dec. 15, 2011)

Dear Ms. Dortch,

The undersigned Video Relay Service (“VRS”) providers are jointly submitting this letter in the above-referenced proceeding to express their consensus view that it is premature for the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) to consider adopting the per-user compensation proposal set forth in its December 2011 *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (“FNPRM”).¹

The FNPRM contemplates several changes to further enhance the VRS program. We believe many of these changes will result in needed structural improvements to the program and should be adopted forthwith. We are concerned, however, about other changes being contemplated and we believe these changes require further dialogue and detailed review. In particular, we are concerned about the Commission’s proposal to replace the current tiered, per-minute model with a per-user compensation model.²

As an initial matter, we wish to take the opportunity to commend the Commission for its proposals in four key areas:

1. *VRS User Database*. The development of a national mechanism to calculate the number of VRS users is an important objective and will provide greater transparency regarding the actual nature of the VRS market.
2. *iTRS Broadband Pilot Project*. Broadband outreach efforts would result in greater access to, and VRS participation by, lower-income customers.
3. *VRS Access Technology*. Proposed interoperability standards currently being worked out by providers would result in greater functional equivalency for VRS users.

¹ The signatories to this letter also individually intend to file more detailed comments in response to the FNPRM.

² While all of the providers joining this letter agree that a number of steps need to be completed before a change of VRS compensation methodology could be implemented, providers will individually state their views about the feasibility of the per-user approach.

4. Consumer Protection Safeguards. These are necessary to safeguard VRS users against reductions in VRS access and quality, as well as slamming and other porting abuses.

We believe the Commission’s FNPRM proceeding should focus on these four key structural issues at this time. These proposals must be implemented and evaluated before the Commission shifts its focus to considering changes to the VRS compensation methodology. In particular, as the Commission recognizes in the FNPRM, implementation of a VRS User Database is a necessary prerequisite to the adoption of a per-user compensation model. It simply is not possible to calculate accurate per-user compensation amounts without first knowing the number and nature of VRS users.

Further, we recommend that the Commission form a “blue ribbon” advisory committee to address VRS issues, much like the Video Programming and Emergency Access Advisory Committee (VPAAC), Technology Advisory Council (TAC), and Emergency Advisory Committee (EAAC). Specifically, the VRS advisory committee should be charged with developing proposals to ensure that the VRS program is as immune as possible to waste, fraud, and abuse and remains efficient, effective and sustainable for the future. The advisory committee can be asked to review issues related to the existing VRS market, as well as considering alternative compensation models.

VRS consumers and providers have legitimate concerns that the per-user compensation model proposed in the FNPRM will adversely impact the Commission’s VRS program. Accordingly, a formal analysis of this alternative model’s potential impact on VRS should be conducted by the proposed expert advisory committee, which also should consider other alternative models. That analysis should also evaluate the vital information that is sure to be gleaned from the Commission’s implementation of the VRS User Database, TRS Broadband Pilot Program, and iTRS Access Technology Standards.

We look forward to working with the Commission, relay stakeholders and all providers with respect to this matter.

Respectfully,

CSDVRS, LLC

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