

Chairman Genachowski,

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

SorensonVRS and CaptionCall are one of the only places where small taxes that people don't mind paying work properly. Cutting the rates will then completely change the business model, and NOT allow these services to be provided to the people who need them most. For CaptionCall, most of the service recipients are already on a fixed, Social Security or retirement income. Adding large costs and maintenance requirements to their already difficult situations is just going to disconnect them from the communication that the FCC is set it to provide for them. Do NOT cut rates to VRS. Do NOT cut rates to Captioning services.

[Form letter to follow:]

I am writing in response to the FCC's request for comments on the "Structure and practices of the video relay service (VRS) program and on proposed VRS compensation rates." I am very concerned that the changes being considered will destroy a program that is vitally important to people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

I am not deaf, but I know firsthand how VRS works. VRS allows people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to use the "phone" to communicate just like people who can hear. With VRS they can do the things we take for granted - make a doctor's appointment or call a child's school. VRS puts people who are deaf on a more level playing field.

The changes being considered by the FCC would undo much of this progress. VRS largely relies on highly skilled American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. The FCC wants to drastically cut the rate they pay VRS companies for providing this service. Obviously, this will have an immediate and negative effect on the ability of VRS companies to employ and train qualified interpreters.

The FCC has also suggested that VRS can be just as effectively provided through government-mandated software that is used on off-the-shelf equipment like common videophones, computers, or tablets. While such equipment can provide a convenient backup solution, it can't replace the videophones and other technologies specifically designed to take into account the special needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

If the FCC takes away skilled ASL interpreters and innovative equipment, VRS as we know it today won't exist. This would be a huge step backward for the rights and opportunities of Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. Adam Young