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Re: 10-51 - In the Matter of Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program

The FCC, in accordance with legislative, statutory and fiduciary requirements, has been a strong supporter of promoting, advancing, and ensuring telecommunications access for the deaf and hard of hearing community in the United States.

In the current NPRM, the FCC states:

"Based on its analysis of the cost and demand data received from providers, the Fund administrator states that VRS providers' weighted average actual per-minute costs were \$3.5740 for 2010 and \$3.1900 for 2011, and that VRS providers' weighted average projected per-minute costs are \$3.4313 for 2012. RLSA proposes that rates be based on an average of these three numbers, with appropriate adjustments to reflect rate tiers. Using this proposed methodology, RLSA proposes that cost based rates be phased in over a multi-year time period, with the rates restructured in two tiers instead of the current three tiers. Based on a three-year phase-in, RLSA proposes that rates be set initially for Tiers I and II (up to 500,000 minutes each month) at \$5.2877 per minute, and for Tier III (over 500,000 minutes each month) at \$4.5099 per minute."

It is very difficult for consumer to understand the true nature of what these costs actually represent. For example, how much of \$3.4313 is for the person virtually sitting across from me on the screen (the video interpreter)? How much of \$3.4313 is dedicated to research and development? How about maintaining existing technology? And how much of \$3.4313 is used to pay executives and other administrative costs?

Likewise, it's difficult to understand what aspects of \$5.2877 and \$4.5099 (the proposed RLSA rates) really break down to.

It is my view (and frequently the view of Consumer Groups active in this area) that the Commission should treat the funds for what they are: public funds. And as with any type of public funding, the entire process should be completely transparent to the public and not shrouded in redacted documents to preserve competitive advantage.

On a related note, the Commission should be looking very carefully and making sure that public funds (from the TRS Fund) are not used to support or subsidize fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD) marketing campaigns that providers such as Sorenson are currently engaging in.

These campaigns are successful because the FCC is not speaking directly to the consumers that it wants to hear from. The language of the NPRMs are inaccessible and confusing to newcomers. When considering the traditional secrecy that surrounds the rates, it becomes very difficult for consumers to fully understand how little or how much impact the rate changes will actually have.

The NPRM also asks if the VRS industry should migrate to a single medium or technology to facilitate ongoing issues with interoperability. The variety of platforms that currently exist, while they have problems at times with interoperability, they also allow users to pick the best service for their particular needs. In my case, one provider provides videophones with integrated handsets that allows me to use VCO easily. I would not recommend a single platform.

However, if the FCC moves to a single platform, it should completely open-sourced, platform-independent and able to work easily with any existing device and device that may come in the future that could satisfy consumers telecommunications needs.

Thank you.

-Neil McDevitt