

Chairman Genachowski,

Dear FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski,

RE:

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Communication is vital to life. Socializing, discussing important issues, making various appointments, conducting business, getting emergency help--we hearing people take all of this for granted, but the deaf and hard of hearing do not have that privilege without VRS. I am a hearing person who uses this vital communication method to "talk" to my two sisters who have Usher's Syndrome. They were born deaf and have a progressive form of blindness called retinitis pigmentosa. I am not proficient enough in sign language to easily communicate well, so I use Sorenson Video Relay Service to talk to both of them. Without this, I would not be able to help my sisters with problems they have in life, or to chat as I do with my brother who hears like you and me. One of my sisters also has psychological needs and has some serious medical problems. I need to talk with her and medical personnel frequently, and without VRS, this would be nearly impossible. My two sisters live in Florida and Washington and I live in California--this necessitates my use of VRS on a frequent basis.

For many years, every American citizen's phone bill had a monthly surcharge to help pay for equipment and services for the deaf and hard of hearing. This should be reinstated and the amount increased (it was a mere pittance in the past). A small 2% of one's total phone bill, applied to every phone line in America, would easily pay to keep and improve current VRS services. We all pay for wheelchair and handicapped accessible curbs as well as other needs of Americans with Disabilities. Education in our public schools addresses the needs of Americans with Disabilities, paid for by our citizenry. Americans have long been known for our caring for our brethren. Now is not the time to stop doing this. Our president is bound and determined to provide medical insurance and welfare to millions of Americans (both the lazy and the hard-working but currently "down on their luck"). Both of my sisters and their deaf husbands worked long, hard hours in the American workforce and have "paid their dues." They should be granted the continued services of a healthy VRS service system. It used to be "free" for my sisters to call me and for me to call them. This year, it has still been "free" for them to call me, but I must pay to call them. I believe the phone surcharge could and should be used to reverse that change.

There are many people employed in the VRS industry, as well as caring people training to be interpreters for VRS, medical, and law and court services. These people should be allowed to keep their jobs and follow their dreams to be of service to the American public.

I am opposed to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) recent proposals to alter the current VRS program deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans currently use.

I am not in favor of changing compensation rates for VRS providers. This cannot help but result in negative changes to VRS equipment and interpreting. I am concerned that the changes would result in a decline in VRS quality, longer hold times, and less interpreter training.

I oppose the FCC's proposals to require deaf or hard-of-hearing people to use equipment that is designed by and for hearing people and government-mandated software. Why fix a VRS system - equipment and service - that already is working" We do not require wheelchair users to provide their own curb ramps.

Please consider the Americans with Disabilities Act's mandate to provide access to functionally-equivalent communication for deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans. Do not negate the progress that has already been made in this area. Keep quality VRS for deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans!

Thank you for your service and for "listening" to my message.

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