STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS

Re: Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; Speech-to-Speech and Internet Protocol (IP) Speech-to-Speech Telecommunications Relay Services, CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 08-15, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

A cornerstone of the Americans with Disabilities Act is to ensure that persons with disabilities can access the tools they need to lead prosperous, productive and fulfilling lives. Speech-to-Speech Relay is an important and underutilized service available to those with speech disabilities. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking raises important questions about how to improve upon the service and how we can provide more information so the disability community can take advantage of it. The NPRM also tentatively concludes that IP-Speech-to-Speech (IP-STS) service is eligible for compensation from the TRS Fund, and it seeks comment on issues related to the administration of IP-STS as a covered service. I am pleased to support the requests for comment and the tentative conclusions as they shine a light on some very critical issues in the provision of these services. Moreover, it is my hope that the comments we receive will enable the FCC to complete these proceedings quickly in order to provide those with speech disabilities additional tools for staying connected.

I would like to thank the disabilities community for bringing these issues to the Commission's attention and my colleagues for their interest in opening a proceeding to address the specific needs of those with speech disabilities.